# “Physical Education Cooperating Teachers in a Community of Practice in Ireland: Participatory Action Learning Action Research”

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## ABSTRACT

### Developing the Role of Physical Education Cooperating Teachers through a Teacher Education Community of Practice in Ireland: A Participatory Action Learning Action Research Study

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The reconceptualisation of school placement (Teaching Council, 2013) poses a challenge to initial teacher education in Ireland. Some criticised the timing (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2013). Others considered it to be too great a professional leap (O'Grady, 2017). This study sought to explore if and how cooperating teachers could develop as mentors in the Irish context, through engagement in a 'participatory action learning action research' (PALAR) 'mentoring community of practice' (M-CoP).

Qualitative data collection methods included: questionnaires with stimulus recall, pre-workshop questions, workshop observation, workshop artefacts, reflective journals, learning journey plans, and extended focus group discussions. Data were analysed via constant comparison of codes and categories.

CTs reported that their transformed practice as a mentor and a leader was achieved due to the multi-process, meta-pedagogical, meta-model design of the PALAR M-CoP. They indicated that the meta-model enhanced their fluency in the 'language of critique' enabling them to identify and become exercised about a range of complex barriers to growth. It also developed their fluency in the languages of 'possibility' and 'leadership for change and empowerment', which aided them to cope with, and overcome barriers to growth, resulting in the empowerment of themselves and other school placement partners.

**Dedication**

*In Honor of My Father*

To a sage, who regularly asked me after school: "*what have you learned since I saw you last*", I am indebted to for my love of learning.
To a mentor, who demonstrated a value for my achievements by archiving my first gold star in his diary, I am grateful to for my drive to do better.
To a true intellectual, who all my life has been overheard chastising the voice on the radio or tv, I am appreciative of for my growing insistence to question everything and accept nothing.

*In Memory of My Mother*

A fearless power house mould breaker with gallons of gumption, my Mother 'tried' to teach me: To not give up on something that is important;
To do the right thing simply because it is the right thing to do;
To be relentless in the face of conformity and to do battle with that which is unjust.
Without her, this study would never have started and I would not be me.

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*"Persuasive, persistent and bold. We encourage and empower people to turn ingenuity into reality and make important things happen*". That the above quote is published on the University of Birmingham website is quite serendipitous. Twenty years ago, I boarded a plane to Birmingham where I planned to study to become a PE teacher. During my time, I worked with an incredible array of educators all of whom inspired me daily and whose passion and professionalism shaped my journey to this point. Particular appreciation must go to Georgie O'Gara, Davina Allen and Eamonn Devlin, who by just being them, made me want to do better, both in work and in life. Thank you.

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**List of Abbreviations**

*AfL:* Assessment for Learning
*ASTI:* Association for Secondary Teachers in Ireland
*CoP:* Community of Practice
*COPET:* Cooperating PE Teacher
*CPD:* Continuing Professional Development
*CPDL:* Continuing Professional Development and Learning
*CT:* Cooperating Teacher
*ITE:* Initial Teacher Education
*M-CoP:* Mentoring Community of Practice
*OECD:* Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
*PALAR:* Participatory Action Learning Action Research
*PALAR M-CoP:* Participatory Action Learning Action Research Mentoring Community of Practice
*PAL:* Participatory Action Learning
*PAR:* Participatory Action Research
*PISA:* Programme for International Student Assessment
*PST:* Pre-service Teacher
*SP:* School Placement
*TALIS:* Teaching and Learning International Survey
*TE:* Teacher Education
*TEI:* Teacher Education Institution
*TUI:* Teachers' Union of Ireland
*UT:* University Tutor

# 1 Introduction

> All this thinking about the future and our impact can bring any number of reactions – some of us will strain at the leash to get stuck in and work with others to shape that future for what we believe will be for the better. Some of us may decide to accept each day as it unfolds and simply make the best of it. Others may quake at the prospect of all of our fears being realised. And some of us may be overwhelmed by the awesome power and responsibility that comes with the realisation that the world is what you make it (Ó'Ruairc, 2015a, p. 2).

With the opening quote in mind, it is important to provide a backdrop for the study and to outline the research problem. In this introductory chapter, a snapshot is given, describing the complex historical, socio-political, cultural and economic contexts, in which the research is located. How these complexities have influenced the current continuing professional development and learning [CPDL] landscape is considered. The challenges to recent CPDL developments and expectations are broached, with a solution introduced as a way forward. Finally, the research questions are outlined and a map of the remaining thesis structure is provided.

## *1.1 Continuing Professional Development and Learning*

### 1.1.1 *The 'Ideal'*

"Teachers are always learning so that they can always teach" (O'Ruairc, 2020, p. 2). As such, access to "regular and systematic" CPDL is key (Braga, Jones, Bulger and Elliott, 2017, p. 288). The Teaching Council of Ireland (2011) promotes engagement in CPDL suggesting it should be: "lifelong" and should comprise of "the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their careers" (p. 19). Researchers have identified key characteristics and theories, which are central to transformative CPDL for teachers. With complexity theorists highlighting that learning is not linear (Rahman, Hoban and Nielsen, 2014), it is recommended that CPDL be sustained and iterative over the span of their career (Sammut, 2014; Pratt, 2015; Parker and Patton, 2017). According to social learning theorists (Wenger and Snyder, 2000), CPDL should facilitate opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and collegiality (Desimone, 2011; de Vries, 2014) and for authentic relationships to be nurtured (Taylor, 2009; Sammut, 2014). As Schön (1983, 1987) theorised, experiences should facilitate critical reflection over various cycles and steps of the CPDL process. According to 'progressive education' (Dewey, 1916, 1933) and 'self-determination' theorists (Ryan and Deci, 2006; Benita, Roth and Deci 2013) processes must nurture democratic participation, which is personalised and participant driven enough (Deglau, Ward and O'Sullivan, 2006; Lank, Randell-Kahn, Rosenbaum and Tate, 2008; Jayaram, Moft, and Scott, 2012; Sammut, 2014) to maximise teacher autonomy (Benita *et al.,* 2013). In order to reconcile the past with the future and vice versa, situated

learning experiences (Lave, 2008; Cochran-Smith, Ell, Ludlow, Grudnoff and Aitken, 2014; Catalano, 2015) must be accessed to enable teachers to apply their new learning in their professional context (Dewey, 1916; O'Sullivan and West-Burnham, 2011). There is momentum building for CPDL to be empowering (Zimmerman, 2000; Edwards and McClintock, 2013), particularly in the face of contextual challenges (Sammut, 2014). A similarly under-developed CPDL characteristic linked to empowerment, is flagged by complexity (Nielsen, Clarke, Triggs, and Collins, 2010; Opfer and Pedder, 2011, Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014) and critical scholars alike (Habermas, 1978; Taylor and Cranton, 2013; Fleming, 2016). They emphasise the need to raise teachers' critical consciousness, so that they may identify how to effect change in their situations (Sobottka, 2013). Once empowered to act as change agents for themselves, teachers can act as 'teacher leaders' for others, making change more likely to occur (Cooper, Stanulis, Brondyk, Hamilton, Macaluso and Meier, 2016). When CPDL processes plan for the above characteristics, as both part of the process as well as the intended outcomes, the result can be transformational (Brennan, 2017).

### 1.1.2 *The Contextual 'Reality'*

In contrast with the above, the reality is that, "CPD[L] has remained relatively unchanged and continues to be of limited value to many [Physical Education] PE teachers" (Braga *et al.,* 2017, p. 289). Whilst there is increasing research reporting the negative aspects of CPDL which deter teachers from wanting to engage (Ng, 2010; McMillan, McConnell and O'Sullivan, 2016), there is less evidence identifying teachers' being supported to understand barriers to their engagement (Cooper *et al.,* 2016). CPDL has historically been entrenched with antiquated values and practices

(Pratt, 2015; Armour, Makopoulou, and Chambers, 2012) and typically fails to be evidence-informed (Teaching Council, 2016). Recent critics of traditional CPDL maintain that the predominantly referenced models fail to result in transformative outcomes (Boylan, Coldwell, Maxwell and Jordan, 2018). They indicate that CPDL models tend to prioritise 'what' is to be learned and developed, (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), rather than 'how' teachers best grow and develop their sense of "professionality" (Evans, 2002, p. 131). Moreover, they fail to address that CPDL is a complex process, which requires a combination of processes and conditions, which need to work together to support educational change (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). Unfortunately, the reality does not always live up to what is possible (Sammut, 2014).

Reflecting the 'reality' more than the 'ideal', teachers' CPDL models on offer in Ireland tend to be "narrowly defined, lacking in theoretical basis, and rolled out in stops and starts rather than in any coherent or sustainable way" (Harford, 2010, p. 335). Based on reports, CPDL providers in Ireland tend to adopt the more outdated features of traditional international models, including but not limited to Guskey (2002), Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), Desimone, (2009) and Evans (2014). There are claims that CPDL in Ireland does not prompt transformation (Glenn, McDonagh, Sullivan, Roche, and Morgan, 2012). For example, one off discrete events (see Guskey, 2002) (Glenn *et al.,* 2012) are commonly implemented, presuming that a causal linear approach results in outcomes, which are predetermined and repeatable (see Desimone, 2009) (Teaching Council, 2018; Rahman *et al.,* 2014). There continue to be calls for provision to move away from transmissive methods (Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland [ASTI], 2011; 2010; Kennedy, 2014, Teaching Council, 2018), which use external sources (see Guskey, 2002; Desimone, 2009; Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002) at off-site locations

(Armour, 2010). The 'one-size-fits all' approach results in a content focus, which fails to connect with teachers' contexts (Patton, Parker and Pratt, 2013). Being system-focused (Patton and Parker, 2015), CPDL offerings are often determined by policy-mandated initiatives (Brennan, 2017), which tend to reflect an over-focus upon curricular change (Harford, 2010; Gleeson, 2010). Because it fails to meet their needs (Patton and Parker, 2015) and results in minimal impact (Sugrue, 2002), frustrated teachers tend to cease their CPDL engagement (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011; Goodyear, Casey and Kirk, 2013). Indeed, the Teaching Council director recognised that CPDL has not been valued to the extent that it should be in Ireland (Ó'Ruairc, 2015b) and that teachers have not engaged fully with it (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2009).

Teachers' lack of engagement however, has not simply been a matter of insufficient or inadequate provision (O'Grady, 2017). "To understand contemporary Ireland, it is necessary to recognize how much its remote, as well as more recent history, still affects public values and attitudes and offers a key to understanding its institutions, not least its system of education" (OECD, 1991, p. 11). Many CPDL issues exist in Ireland, which are born out of a long history of socio-political and cultural challenges (O'Donoghue, Harford and O'Doherty, 2017). There is evidence to suggest that from the time of British colonisation of Ireland[1], education has been deeply affected (Coolahan, 1981) by complex issues of power and ownership (Clarke, 2012) and by strongly and widely imposed ideologies (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). These issues have contributed to an abuse and neglect of the education system, ultimately

[1] In particular, the education system is said to have had various landlords, including the British Empire, the Catholic Church, the Irish State, and some now suggest the EU. Those overseeing the education system were criticised for being distracted by a zealous desire for power.

undermining it (Clarke, 2012). A "historically inherited inertia" (Young, O'Neill and Mooney Simmie, 2015, p. 38) is evidenced in both teachers' long standing reluctance to question authority and systems (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011) and their difficulty with (Gleeson and O'Donnachain, 2009; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; O'Grady, 2017) and "fear of change"; a fear which is said to have hindered progress (Gleeson, 2012, p. 13).

The "terrible autonomy" of Ireland's educational system (OECD, 1991 cited in Sugrue, 2002, p. 335), as well as a dominant sense of professional competition (Coolahan, 1995; O'Grady, 2017; King, 2019) and associated individualism hinders engagement in and with CPDL (King, 2016). Teachers have become accustomed to working privately as "king or queen of the classroom" (Coolahan, 2003, p. 52). However, the "soft power" wielded by the OECD reflects a growing culture of accountability and performativity (Conway, 2013, p. 52). This is not helped by the fact that "Irish teachers [have] not been encouraged to question the nature and purpose of their practice" traditionally (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011 p. 475). Understandably, as a result, teacher evaluation practices have been resisted (Hogan, Brosnan, De Róiste, MacAlister, Malone, Quirke-Bolt and Smith, 2007; Gassner, Kerger and Schratz*.,* 2010; Ó'Ruairc, 2014). Teacher unions are powerful in Ireland (Gleeson 2010; Harford and O'Doherty, 2016) and abroad (Kangsen and Scammell Rodrigues, 2010). It has been argued that their negative attitude to teacher evaluation has scuppered the development of a critical evaluation culture in the past (Sugrue, 2012). This further serves to exacerbate high levels of professional isolation (Aitken and Harford, 2011; O'Grady, 2017) and insulation (Teaching Council, 2010a), with teachers failing to share practice with one another (Clonan, 2017; Teaching Council, 2018). This is even more debilitating for PE

teachers who are said to suffer from a sense of isolation more than most other subject teachers (Tannehill, MacPhail, Halbert and Murphy, 2013). The above CPDL landscape is problematic, as CPDL model designers and facilitators have been accused of failing to acknowledge and account for the complex context in which CPDL will be embedded (Clark and Wilson, 1991; Howie and Bagnall, 2013; Boylan *et al.,* 2018). This limits the capacity for transformative learning outcomes for teachers (Clark, Triggs and Nielsen, 2014). As will be explored later, striving for this is important within the Irish teacher education context, as fostering change is considered to be difficult (Sugrue, 2013).

### *1.2 Changing Expectations and Roles*

It is important to keep the above challenges in mind when considering the recent reconceptualisation of teacher education in Ireland. Ireland is said to have been embarrassed by the findings of the 2009 OECD survey (Conway, 2013). In reaction to this, the Teaching Council quickly introduced a raft of publications. The 'Guidelines on School Placement' SP is the most relevant publication to this study (Teaching Council, 2013)[2]. Historically, SP has relied upon the goodwill of schools and teachers (Teaching Council, 2013; 2018). The Teaching Council (2013) claimed that additional responsibilities could be fulfilled "without placing an undue burden on schools" (p. 7). However, these guidelines proposed a major overhaul for Initial Teacher Education [ITE] (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; O'Donoghue *et al.,* 2017; Hall, Murphy,

[2] Many of the guidelines are reinforced in the *Céim* publication (Teaching Council, 2020).

Rutherford, Ní Áingléis, 2018), with substantially longer placements[3] and many more formalised expectations for school based partners (Teaching Council, 2013). Young, O'Neill, Mooney Simmie (2015) reflect that such a development requires schools and universities to work in professional partnership and to co-develop through collaboration, mentoring, peer coaching and teamwork processes. However, school university partnerships are a "relatively new concept in Ireland" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 55). The placement model most commonly adopted is the 'work placement model' (Conway, Murphy, Rath and Hall, 2009; Chambers, Armour, Bleakley, Brennan, Herold and Luttrell, 2012). This model tends to be built upon "convenience and availability" (Chambers, Armour, Bleakley, Brennan, Herold and Luttrell, 2011, p. 7). It has been described as: informal (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Harford and O'Doherty, 2016); ad hoc (Harford and O'Doherty, 2016); fragmented (Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen, 2012) and overly reliant on goodwill (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Harford and O'Doherty, 2016). Under-developed relationships and minimal interaction levels have been reported in some quarters (Young and MacPhail, 2015; Hall *et al.,* 2018). This model also tends to put the pre-service teacher [PST] to work, rather than treating them as a learner (Conway *et al.,* 2009), though some progress has been reported in this respect (Hall *et al.,* 2018). This culture and the CPDL system are not conducive to three overarching expectations expressed in the guidelines: i) collegiality and professional dialogue; ii) partnership and; iii) teacher evaluation practices (Teaching Council, 2013).

A consideration of the 'readiness for partnership' is believed to be important in the reconceptualisation of teacher education (Ní Áingléis 2009; Harford and O'Doherty,

[3] In support of the guidelines, the 'Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education' (Teaching Council, 2011) predicted that Ireland "would see greater levels of responsibility devolved to the profession for the provision of structured support" as SP would be extended from 100 to 200 hours (p. 13).

2016). It should be examined in the light of "our own sociocultural histories and perspectives" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 55). Recent research by O'Grady (2017) found that the "reality on the ground" does not reflect the proposed SP vision and that cultural norms prevail (p. 154). It was initially claimed that the re-envisioned expectations were too big a leap for the system (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; O'Donoghue *et al.,* 2017) and "the scale of the change to traditional practice" continues to be identified as an ongoing concern (Hall *et al.,* 2018, p. 18). The timing was also criticized from a socio-economic perspective (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; Harford and O'Doherty, 2016). Cost cutting measures are said to have reduced the profession's sense of volunteerism (ASTI, 2014). Additionally, modern complexities facing teachers are quite overwhelming, including the "terrible toll that the COVID-19 pandemic" is taking on the profession (Allen, Rowan and Singh, 2020, p. 233). One would not condemn teachers for ranking CPDL below more imminent priorities (Madalińska-Michalak, O'Doherty and Assunção Flores, 2018). Compounding this, a lack of responsibility demonstrated by various stakeholders, combined with an absence of investment and CPDL provision, has not encouraged teachers and schools to engage with the guidelines (Sugrue, 2012; O'Grady, 2017). Whilst some partnership universities have introduced CPDL models, there has not been a systematic, formal approach to the development of a CPDL framework for SP (Harford and O'Doherty, 2016; Hall *et al.,* 2018). As Harford and O'Doherty (2016) warn, lack of consideration for an implementation plan "threatens the very essence of the reform agenda" ( p. 39).

Where SP is said to be the "fulcrum" of "teacher education" (Teaching Council, 2020, p. 9), the centre point of that axle, is the relationship between the CT and the PST

(Young and MacPhail, 2016). Though it is accepted that all stakeholders' and SP partners' contributions are necessary for the effective provision of SP (Teaching Council, 2013; 2016; 2020), the thesis turns its attention exclusively to the CT. There is much consensus surrounding the importance of mentoring throughout the learning continuum internationally (Henning, Gut and Beam, 2015). Because there is no single "recipe for success" (Harrison, Lawson and Wortley 2005, p. 425), there are multiple mentoring models cited in the literature. "Expedient reductionist models" have been less accepted as time has gone on (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011, p. 466), with generative models of mentoring[4] increasingly promoted by scholars (Mullen, 2010; Van Ginkel, Verloop and Denessen, 2016).

Some believe that support for the mentoring of ITE-PSTs in Ireland is growing (Teaching Council, 2010a; Chambers *et al.,* 2012). However, as Mooney Simmie and Moles (2011) suggest, in order to understand the mentoring literature, it is important to consider it in the light of the Irish context. Ireland's historical (Young and MacPhail, 2015) and recent (Hall *et al.,* 2018) patterns of engagement in and with mentoring has been described as "hit and miss" (Young and MacPhail, 2015, p. 228). Traditionally, mentoring has been informal and unstructured (O'Grady, 2017) and too reliant upon unpaid volunteerism (Ní Áingléis, 2009; O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018). The degree of engagement and quality of support has varied widely both generally (O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018), and in the PE profession (Young *et al.,* 2015). Levels of participation have ranged on a continuum (Clarke *et al.,* 2014). Historically, some teachers have completely rejected the role (Kelly and Tannehill, 2012; Ó'Ruairc, 2015a). Others have

[4] Sometimes referred to as: growth oriented (Mullen, 2010), developmental, educative (Van Ginkel, 2016), or engagement (Tedder and Lawy, 2009) mentoring.

shown an interest in engaging (MacPhail, 2011; Hall *et al.,* 2018), but have adopted the role of 'classroom placeholder', engaging with the PST minimally (Clarke *et al.,* 2014; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Whilst reluctance is still believed to be common, it is important to acknowledge that a lack of interest is said to have been undermined by a lack of encouragement, as well as CTs' lack of awareness of and perceived competence in the role (MacPhail, 2011). Though it is widely agreed that CTs need to be educated to perform their role effectively (Chambers, 2009), broadly speaking, structural support to achieve this has not been delivered (Young and MacPhail, 2010; O'Grady, 2017)[5]. Despite the major 'sea change' in expectations as outlined in the SP guidelines (Teaching Council, 2013), ITE CTs' role and therefore identity as mentors was delegitimised from the offset, with the Teaching Council (2013) stipulating: "It is acknowledged that the process of mentoring [PSTs] is distinct from the process of mentoring newly qualified teachers" (Teaching Council, 2020, p. 4). Hall *et al.*'s (2018) review of SP recommended that ITE CTs be recognised as mentors and receive investment, equal to that of Droichead mentors. However, an identical statement featured in the Teaching Council's (2020) Céim publication. As O'Grady (2017) asserts, unlike induction mentoring, "the commitment by national stakeholders to properly support and resource the development of [mentoring and SP] is questionable" (p. 28). Hall *et al.* (2018) reported that CTs believed that there was no CT CPDL provision, or "none that they were aware of" (p. 145). Traditionally, CTs have shared that a lack of support by key stakeholders made fulfilling their role more challenging (Clarke, Collins, Triggs, Nielsen, Augustine, 2012; Young and MacPhail, 2015; O'Grady, 2017). Where such deterring factors are combined with a lack of motivation,

[5] To date, there has been inadequate attention paid to the development and implementation of effective CPDL models for ITE mentoring abroad also (Russell and Russell, 2011; Salm and Mulholland, 2015).

CTs are more inclined to opt out of the process (Young *et al.,* 2015). These historical and recent complexities serve to rob CTs of a potentially powerful CPDL opportunity. There is increasing recognition of the benefits of mentoring (Chambers, Templin and McCullick, 2015; Young and MacPhail, 2015) not merely for the PST (Crutcher and Naseem, 2016), but for the CT (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson*,* 2009) and their school (Mullen, 2010). Indeed, the 'Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning'[6] identifies 'mentoring' as one of six key 'learning processes' (Teaching Council, 2016).

### *1.3 Changing Directions and Models*

Patton, Parker and Tannehill (2015) borrow Einstein's definition of insanity: "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results" (p. 39). Whilst it was accepted that it would take time for the SP guidelines to 'bed down' (Teaching Council, 2013; O'Grady, 2017), in the seven years since the guidelines were introduced, CPDL provision, which is believed to be central to the efficacy of the mentoring role, is still relatively irregular and varied in quality (Hall *et al.,* 2010). CPDL models generally have been criticised for failing to transform teachers' practices and attitudes (Boylan *et al.,* 2018). Whilst there is a reported hunger for CT CPDL (Hall *et al.,* 2018), provision must heed Brennan's (2017) recommendation to excel "beyond previous national PD efforts in the Irish context, which [do] not result in significant teacher change" (p. 17). Both CPDL model (Boylan *et al.,* 2018) and theoretical framework design (Waters and Loton, 2019) scholars recommend that change requires a meta-approach to design, which acknowledges the need for the 'multidimensional' and the 'partial' adoption of elements of various models and learning theories. In the

[6] "The name Cosán, the Irish word for pathway, has been chosen to reflect the fact that learning is, fundamentally, a journey" (Teaching Council, 2016, p. 2).

relative absence of CPDL provision for CTs (Hall *et al.,* 2018), this study sought to act more radically in the treatment of CTs as both learners and as "teacher educators" (Hall *et al.,* 2018, p. 27). CTs from one partnership university were invited to develop as professional mentors. As promoted by the Cosán Framework, a 'multi-learning process' CPDL model was adopted to develop 'generative mentoring' attitudes and practices through the development of a 'community of practice' (CoP) using a 'participatory action learning action research' strategy. It was hoped that the combined potential of these learning processes, would do more than simply offer CPDL, but would also present a "powerful mechanism for [CT] growth and development" (Parker and Patton, 2017, p. 448).

### 1.3.1 *'Community of Practice' as a CPDL Process*

CoPs have been promoted in Ireland (Teaching Council, 2016) and abroad (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011), and by PE researchers (Braga *et al.,* 2017). Building on theories of social learning (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978), CoPs involve "groups of individuals who share a common interest in a specific topic" and who are focused upon gaining knowledge through working together (Bardon and Borzillo, 2016, p. 11). In the pursuit of their passion (Wenger, McDermot and Snyder, 2002), CoP members share concerns (Wenger, 2009) and assist one another to solve problems (Wenger *et al.,* 2002). They are also established and facilitated to support organisational growth and reform (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas, 2006; Sun-Keung Pang and Wang, 2016).

Legitimate CoPs are founded upon three dimensions: domain, practice and community (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The domain dimension is characterised by a sense of common purpose (Saldaña, 2014), with members sharing a collective identity (Wenger, 1998), passion for (Wenger, 1998; Parker, Patton, and Tannehill, 2012) and commitment to developing their expertise (Wenger, 2006; Wesely, 2013). The practice dimension involves a "time commitment to plan, evaluate, reflect and speculate", in order to improve both individual and collective practice (Lloyd and Beard, 1995 cited in Keay, 2006, p. 288). This dimension maximises "the capacity of members to innovatively and creatively adapt, overcome challenges, refine existing knowledge and co-generate new knowledge" (Holland, 2017, p. 114). The community contains the people who "care about the domain" (McDonald, 2014, p. 328). This dimension offers a social structure where CTs can interact (Lum Kai Mun, 2016). It allows for co-constructivist learning and bonding (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011; McDonald, 2014). As CoP members engage and share, they build supportive relationships (Wenger, 2006), offering solidarity and a sense of unity (Fricke, 2013). According to Saldaña (2014), "interactions within these three CoP dimensions propitiate fertile ground for group collaboration and innovation" (p. 1).[7]

Scholars (Chambers *et al.,* 2012; Ó'Ruairc, 2013; King, 2016) and the Teaching Council (2011; 2012; 2013, 2016) promote the development of CoPs in Ireland and there is growing evidence of CoPs being cultivated (Tannehill and Murphy, 2012). However, school management, teachers (Hartung and Oliveira, 2013) and unions

[7] The front cover of Holland (2018) is located in Appendix A. This paper reports on and discusses how through the development of the three CoP dimensions, CTs in this study accrued many mentor benefits beyond that which they had experienced previously in their role as a CT. The paper seeks to identify that mentoring is a more beneficial CPDL process, when combined with CoP engagement.

(Parker, Patton and Tannehill *et al.,* 2012) do not appear to have demonstrated an adequate interest in building the organisational architecture required to scaffold the development of sustainable CoPs (Pyrko, Dörfler and Eden, 2017). Those socio-cultural-economic and historical barriers introduced above act as a roadblock to CoP development in Ireland (King, 2016; Pyrko *et al.,* 2017). Because culture is influential, when it runs contrary to CoP philosophies, engagement becomes more challenging for members (Scheerens and Sleeger, 2010; King, 2016).

Whilst mentoring is a valuable CPDL process in and of itself, it is believed that CTs should be offered the opportunity to discuss their issues; have a voice and feel valued (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; Caena, 2014; O'Grady, 2017). As such, it could be suggested that engagement in and with a mentoring CoP [M-CoP] holds more promise for rich learning than engagement in mentoring alone. Indeed, scholars suggest that the development of M-CoPs is a necessary next step for mentoring CPDL in Ireland (Dunning, Meegan, Woods and y, 2011; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; Hall *et al.,* 2018).

Further research is however required to fill particular gaps in the understanding of CoPs. Evidence must be sought to better understand how to prevent ineffective CoP learning climates which hinder engagement (Parker *et al.,* 2012), with a particular focus upon how social interactions are supported (Van Kruiningen, 2013) in a democratic (Bardon and Borzillo, 2016) and facilitative way (Poekert, 2011, p. 19). Additionally, a better understanding must be reached pertaining to how CoPs, which are sometimes accused of buttressing tradition and the status quo (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Stoll *et al.,* 2006), can instead challenge it. Sobottka (2013) suggests that where CoPs are

poorly developed, CoP members' sense of pride in their work and achievements are underdeveloped. For example, some facilitators merely plan for knowledge sharing processes as opposed to knowledge creation processes, which leads to stagnation and a failure to reach potential (Hartung and Oliveira, 2013). From a complexity perspective (Byrne, 1998; Morrison, 2008), the situated and experiential nature of mentoring must be closely considered. It is also important to better understanding how CoPs, which exist as a complex system, interacting with and between other complex systems (Rahman *et al.,* 2014, p. 24), can function and be organised (Pyrko *et al.,* 2017), despite the complex barriers which are posed by the socio-political, cultural and economic aspects of the Irish CPDL system. Adopting Wenger-Traynor's (2013) mindset, it is acknowledged that no one theory and indeed no one CPDL model or process is sufficient for CT growth and transformation. Adapting the "plug and play principle" (Wenger-Traynor, 2013 p. 1), the mentoring CoP [M-CoP] model in this study was combined with teacher inquiry.

### 1.3.2 *'Teacher Inquiry' as a CPDL Process*

In the 'Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning', the Teaching Council (2016) not only identifies 'research' as one of the six 'learning processes', it also explicitly refers to it being central to three other learning processes[8]. The Council's 'Strategic Plan' (2018-2020) outlined that "research by and for teachers is essential to support their learning and practice as professionals" (p. 3). The Teaching Council's commitment to research promotion is further reflected by the launch of the CROÍ

[8]'Research learning processes' include: 'reading and professional contributions', 'practice and collaboration', 'courses, programmes, workshops and other events' (Teaching Council, 2016, p. 28).

[Collaboration and Research for Ongoing Innovation] Research Series, which highlights "the fact that research is at the heart of teaching and learning" (p. 4). The aim of the series is "to engage with all stakeholders to ensure that all the high quality research" results in positive outcomes (Teaching Council, 2019, p. 1). These developments were introduced after this study was conducted however, and as yet, no formal review has taken place[9]. In the absence of a more recent review, it is important to acknowledge the historical challenges.

It has been argued that there is a relationship between the "official neglect of educational research" in Ireland (Gleeson, 2012, p. 1) and the lack of an enquiring mind set held within the teaching profession (Gleeson and O'Donnachain, 2009; King, 2011). This is considered to be the case with both teachers (Sugrue, 2002; Gleeson, 2012) and CTs (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). "Practitioner agnosticism and scepticism" surrounding reflective practice and research is believed to have festered over time (Gleeson, 2012, p. 13). A bad reputation (Kaestle, 1993) has led to the belief that educational research is neither practical nor meaningful for teachers (Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010). Such negative attitudes are derived from research being too often done 'on' or 'for' teachers as opposed to 'with' or 'by' them (Heron and Reason, 2001; Bruce, Flynn and Stagg-Peterson, 2011; Olesen and Nordentoft, 2013). Scholars indicate that a tradition of teacher research has not grown due to a lack of: teacher interest (Glenn *et al.,* 2012); encouragement and reward (Lynch, Hennessy and Gleeson, 2013); necessary structures (Sugrue 2009; Gleeson, 2012) and appropriate resources (Sugrue 2009; Gleeson 2010; Gleeson, 2012). Therefore, teacher education

[9] The last review written for the Teaching Council on teachers' engagement with research was conducted by Glenn *et al.* (2012).

researchers are called upon to better recognise, design and scaffold initial steps in research for teachers (Cordingley, 2015a). As Cordingley (2015a) maintains, this serves to support teachers to see research as relevant, accessible and achievable. Whilst there are many forms of practitioner research, given the complex histories introduced above, and earlier in this chapter, 'participatory action learning action research' (PALAR) was selected for the study.[10]

#### 1.3.2.1 'Participatory Action Learning Action Research' Strategy

As noted above, the PALAR strategy has been informed by many other forms of action research (Lewin, 1948; McNiff, 2013) and participatory inquiry (Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield, 2016). The 'participatory action learning' (PAL) element of PALAR is believed to support growth through pedagogically compatible processes and activities (MacKenzie, Tan, Hoverman and Baldwin, 2012; Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). Through PALAR, teachers engage in the cyclical process of reflecting, planning, acting and reflecting (Teare, 2013) as individuals (Kearney and Zuber-Skerritt, 2012) and as a community[11] (Locke, Alcorn and O'Neill, 2013). However, unlike many other research approaches, members support one another as they deal with the complex realities of the workplace (Smith, Rosenzweig and Schmidt, 2010; MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012). PALAR is often adopted in circumstances where CTs have been poorly served, starved of required resources and prevented from organising to enact change (Gilchrist,

[10] See Appendix B for a list and explanation of related research strategies.

[11] It is important to acknowledge the parallels between participatory action learning 'sets' and 'communities' of practice. Similar to the community dimension of a CoP, "sets" are "small groups" who engage in "conscious [action] learning from and with one another" (Kearney and Zuber-Skerritt, 2012, p. 405). For the purpose of consistency, the term community will be adopted in this thesis henceforth.

2009 cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). Aligned to critical theory principles, (Habermas, 1978; Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014), PALAR processes[12] bring to the fore, the need to evaluate and challenge power asymmetries, which work against desired goals (Kenton, 2014). Influenced by complexity theory (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), 'critical theory' (Habermas, 1978) and 'empowerment theory' (Edwards and McClintock, 2013), the PALAR strategy helps to shine a light on how complex systems are constructed (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), change and grow (Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014). PALAR drives for a "vision of a better, freer, more just [system, which] motivates and energises us to try various strategies and pathways to achieve our goals as activists" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015, p. 12).

This study sought to examine if, and how a PALAR strategy could facilitate a M-CoP to develop CTs as professional mentors and to achieve change in the complex system of SP in Ireland (Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield, 2016).

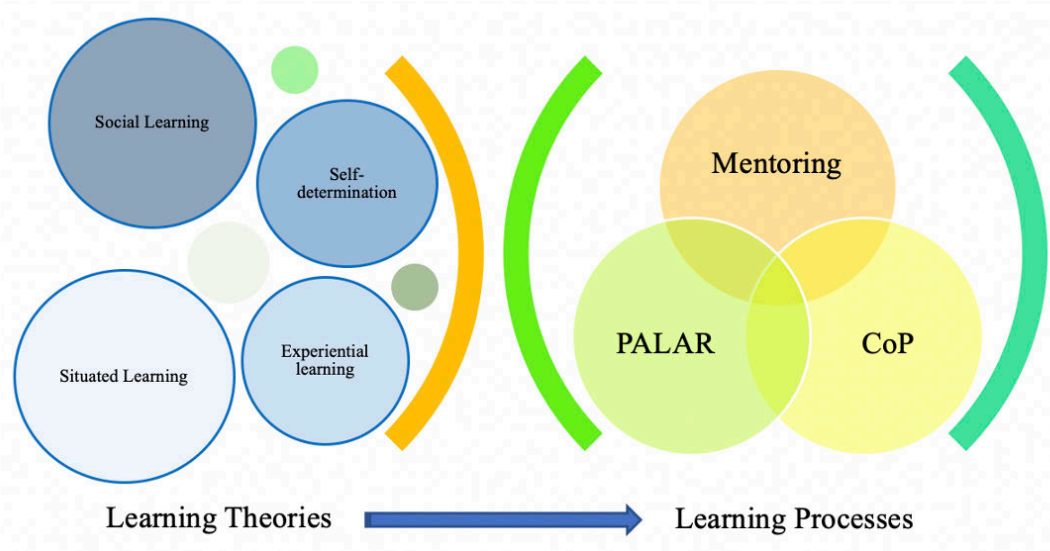
### *1.4 PALAR M-CoP Meta-Framework*

This study's theoretical framework and model design was led by a meta-design approach (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008). Accounting for the aforementioned complexities within the CPDL system in which this research is framed, a multi-dimensional approach was taken to produce a 'fit-for-purpose' theoretical CPDL meta-

[12] PALAR Processes include: 3) the eleven PALAR processes, which will explored further in Chapter Two: 1) defining project goals and mission; 2) setting priorities; 3) developing a resources management proposal; 4) monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous); 5) exploring problems; 6) solving a problem; 7) managing a conflict; 8) managing change; 9) evaluating a project (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013); 10) preparation for presentations and; 11) presentation and celebration. Zuber-Skerrit (2002).

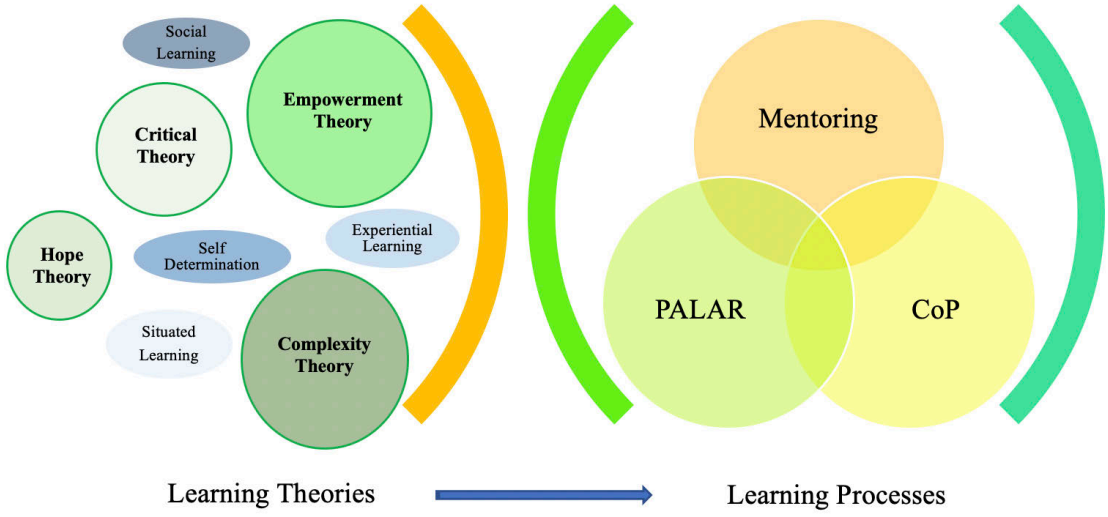
framework (Waters and Loton, 2019) and CPDL meta-model (Boylan *et al.*, 2018). At the 'design time' (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008, p. 3), based on what was understood about the social reality, a multiple learning process model was designed, comprising of: mentoring, CoP and PALAR. As illustrated in Figure 1-1, the following theories informed its design: social learning theory; situated learning theory; experiential learning theory and self-determination theory.

Figure 1-1 CPDL Initial Multi-learning Process Meta-Framework




However, it is acknowledged that whilst the above theories were used to build the initial meta-model design, particularly with mentoring and CoP processes in mind, the participatory nature of the study allowed for the meta-model and meta-framework to expand and evolve based on the CTs' CPDL throughout the study (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008). As such, the following theories informed the framework and model design at different points in time and for various reasons. These include: complexity theory, conflict theory, hope theory and empowerment theory.

Figure 1-2. CPDL Evolving Multi-learning Process Meta-Framework




## *1.5 Research Questions*

This study was guided by the main and formal research questions in table 1.

Table 1 Research Questions

| Main Research Question |
|---|
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| 1. Can a PALAR M-CoP act as a transformative CPDL vehicle for CTs' growth; and if so, what elements of the CPDL model support growth? |
| 2. Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support the identification of complex barriers to growth and CPDL implementation; and if so, what are these barriers; who poses them and how do they impact CTs' growth and CPDL implementation? |
| 3. Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support CTs to alleviate complex barriers to mentor growth and CPDL implementation; and empower them to overcome such barriers and if so, how? |

As will be explained in Chapter Three, these questions grew from evolving research questions, allowing the model to expand and develop. A map of how the research questions evolved into those above can be found in Appendix D.

### *1.6 Study Significance*

This study contributes to the an array of literature bases, fills many gaps and offers important insights for a wide range of stakeholders: Below are some of the key contributions. This study:

- Fills a significant void in the research base, within Ireland and abroad, with respect to the combined operationalisation of the three learning processes in this study: mentoring, CoPs and the PALAR strategy.
- Offers a transferable CPDL template, which can be used and adapted widely for a wide range of stakeholders. This study should be of particular interest to the HEIs (and all SP partners), the Teaching Council, the DES and teacher unions, to name a few. Until now there has been limited evidence to explain how a CPDL model can align to, and reinforce so many key developments in education simultaneously e.g. the aforementioned continuum, SP guidelines, code of professional practice, Cosán, Droichead, Croí, Céis, to name a few.
- Offers practical strategies for democratically supporting the interactional and dialogic dynamics of a CoP, offering PALAR as a pedagogical strategy.
- Extends the SP conversation further through the voice of the CT, offering additional evidence regarding the challenges which committed CTs face when attempting to implement the guidelines on SP.

- Expands the literature base pertaining to the benefits of mentoring for the CT, whilst also offering evidence to explain how CT CPDL can result in second order change and positive outcomes for other beneficiaries, beyond that of school pupils.
- Suggests a CPDL pathway for teachers, whatever their domain focus, to develop multiple identities, including that of teacher, leader, researcher and person.
- Contributes to the understanding of empowerment theory, with respect to how a CPDL model can facilitate teachers to be empowered at the individual, community and organisational level, and also enable them to empower others in their communities and organisation. It also expands on the ways in which individual empowerment and community empowerment act as pre-requisites, for organisational empowerment, offering lessons in how this may be achieved.
- Provides some insight into how methodological and pedagogical theories, such as complexity, conflict, hope and empowerment theory can be used prospectively to support change and transformation, as opposed to merely used retrospectively for evaluative and analytical purposes.
- Provides evidence to support the transformative power of meta-design for the construction of CPDL theoretical frameworks, meta-models and meta-pedagogies.
- Answers the call from participatory research critics to articulate the levels of and nature of teacher participation in research processes, and offers significant evidence of the potential of PALAR for teachers.

## *1.7 Remaining Thesis Outline*

Table 2 Remaining Thesis Outline

| Remaining Thesis Outline |
| --- |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review' - Insight into the research problem and a rationale for the study are presented in this chapter. A historical snapshot of the socio-cultural and political challenges facing CPDL and SP are provided. The additional challenges to current and changing expectations posed by the fiscal crisis are also considered. The chapter explores theories, concepts, models and frameworks from the literature base, drawing particularly upon three CPDL processes: mentoring, CoPs and PALAR; both generally and contextually. This chapter culminates by offering a potential CPDL framework for ITE mentoring, which aligns with the 'Guidelines on School Placement' (Teaching Council, 2013) and the 'Cosán Framework for Teacher Learning' (Teaching Council, 2016). |
| Chapter 3: 'Methodology' - The aim of this chapter is to detail the researcher's trajectory, as well as multi-purpose position within the study. A clear and detailed account of the decision-making processes, which led to the selected research design, paradigm, strategy, data collection methods and data analysis procedures is provided. Where the literature review draws upon the 'participatory action learning' (PAL) element of PALAR, this chapter places a spotlight on the 'participatory action research' (PAR) element of the strategy. Detail is provided with respect to how PALAR was utilised to shape the M-CoP, mapping M-CoP activities to PALAR processes. It also offers information regarding the CTs' engagement as co-researchers. A flavour of how the theoretical framework informed the methods will also be offered. The chapter closes with the identification of how the ethical standards were upheld and how the robustness of the study was ensured. |
| Chapter 4: 'Findings' - This chapter presents three overarching thematic findings from the study: i) PALAR M-CoP: A Transformative CPDL Vehicle; ii) Complex Barriers to Mentor Growth; iii) Overcoming Complex Barriers to Growth |
| Chapter 5: 'Discussion of Findings' - This chapter outlines what the researcher aimed to achieve with CTs, offering a rationale for those aims. Four overarching themes are explored: i) Transformative CPDL Meta-Design and Meta-Pedagogies for Mentor Growth; ii) Fluency in the 'Language of Critique'; iii) Fluency in the 'Language of Possibility'; iv) Fluency in the 'Language of Leadership for Empowerment and Change'. |
| Chapter 6: 'Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations' - This chapter summarises the thesis outline, addressing the research questions and providing key conclusions. The contextual significance of the findings is explored, identifying potential gaps, which the study addresses. Limitations are acknowledged and recommendations are also made with |

respect to policy and practice going forward, identifying implications for relevant stakeholders. Finally, recommendations are offered regarding future research.

# 2 Literature Review

## *2.1 Introduction*

This study sought to explore if, and how, in the contemporary education context in Ireland, cooperating teachers [CTs] could be developed as effective professional mentors for PE pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a Participatory action Learning Action Research [PALAR] Mentoring Community of Practice [M-CoP].

Prior to being presented with the research methodology, it is intended that the reader will be prepared to understand the research context, problem and purpose. The literature review explores in more depth and breadth, those themes introduced in Chapter One: CPDL: 'the ideal'; the historical context; the recent context; new expectations and new directions. Table 3 maps these thematic sections to the research questions. At the outset of each section the purpose will be outlined in the light of the relevant research question/s.

## *2.2 Continuing Professional Development and Learning: 'A General Picture'*

Table 3 reminds the reader about the purpose of section 2.2.

Table 3 Thematic Purpose 1

| ***Literature Themes*** | ***Purpose*** |
|---|---|
| *1*: CPDL: '*The Ideal*' | '*The Ideal*': In order to understand the research problem regarding the provision of CPDL in Ireland, it is important to first define it and provide an overview of what effective CPDL looks like. Only then can the reader later judge whether the proposed CPDL model is a) effective and b) achievable and sustainable within the Irish context. This section also prepares the reader to later identify if and how the proposed CPDL model applies and develops the characteristics of high quality CPDL. |

### *2.2.1 CPDL: Definition, Importance and Purpose*

Armour, Quennerstedt, Chambers and Makopoulou (2015) describe the concept of effective continuing professional development and learning [CPDL] as a "somewhat slippery concept" (p. 5). Over the past decade, there has been a key shift in terminology related to teacher learning (Labone and Long, 2016). Whilst many terms have been used[13], 'continuing professional development' [CPD] has been adopted most commonly. Cordingley (2015b) more recently suggests however, that the term 'continuous professional development and learning' (CPDL) is more appropriate. She refers to a growing expectation for CPDL to delve deeper into the support offered to teachers to apply and further their learning, particularly in their own contexts.

[13] In-career development, in-service education and training (INSET), lifelong learning and professional learning, professional development (PD) and continuing professional development (CPD) are commonly used terms. Though it was the aim of this study to design transformative CPDL, when examining the Irish context, the 'CPD' term will be adopted.

According to the Teaching Council (2011), CPD "refers to lifelong teacher learning and comprises the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their careers" (p. 19). Barber and Mourshed (2007) assert that: "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (Cited in Holdsworth, 2010, p. 13). The Teaching Council (2010a) highlights that realistically; even the best ITE programmes cannot possibly "furnish 'finished products'" (p. 13). It has been stated that it can take ten years of 'repeated practice' to develop expertise (Ericsson *et al.,* 1993 cited in Duncombe and Armour, 2004). Constant societal change makes CPDL engagement even more pertinent, regardless of experience (Teaching Council, 2010a). What is widely agreed upon in academic circles is this: "the provision of effective and appropriate forms of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers is a key factor in improving the quality of education" (Yoon and Armour, 2017, p. 428). The Teaching Council's (2010a) statement reflects the need for career long CPDL: "During the course of her/his career, the teacher must nurture and develop her/his: pedagogic and subject knowledge-bases; capacity for moral and civic leadership; cultural understanding; professional judgement; capacity for collaboration; and expertise as a reflective learner, researcher and problem-solver" (p. 21). This tall order highlights that whilst CPDL is a responsibility for the teacher, it is also a professional right (Teaching Council, 2010b; 2016). Therefore, it is important to consider what effective professional learning should do.

The design and facilitation of an effective CPDL strategy is likely to result in many positive outcomes (Patton *et al.,* 2015). It is central that CPDL results in enhanced practice (Patton *et al.,* 2015). With enhanced practice comes positive outcomes for

those in the teacher's charge (Armour, 2009; King, 2016). To achieve this, CPDL must first develop in teachers an array of qualities, which empower them to innovatively review their practice in the light of evidence and research; and to adapt efficiently to ongoing societal and curricular changes (European Commission, 2004 cited in Armour *et al.,* 2015). Effective CPDL achieves this by acting as "a catalyst that unleashes new energies [and] fosters fresh enthusiasm" (Hogan *et al.*, 2007, p. i), by "stimulating curiosity [and] sustaining interest" (Armour, 2009, p. 5). Whilst engagement should enhance teachers' knowledge and skills (Labone and Long, 2016), King (2016) highlights that CPDL should achieve more than facilitating teachers to build knowledge, as this typically fails to "result in deep professional learning" (p. 575). As attitudes, beliefs (Labone and Long, 2016) and values are challenged (Evans, 2010; King, 2016), existing pedagogic practices are re-considered and improved (Teaching Council, 2010b). High quality CPDL should provide teachers with the self-confidence and capability to follow pathways, which give them a voice and platform for engaging in national conversations and debates, and to advocate for their subject and profession (Armour, 2009). Many have proposed that high quality CPDL facilitates teachers to develop networks and communities, allowing for the sharing of expertise (Armour, 2009; King, 2016; 2014; Brennan, 2017). CPDL should also leave teachers feeling responsible for altering their practice as a result of their CPDL engagement (Opfer and Pedder 2011; 2008; King, 2016). According to scholars, despite decades of research into CPDL, there is little robust evidence to offer a clear picture of what effective CPDL looks like or how it achieves the above outcomes (Hill, Beisiegel and Jacob, 2013; Armour *et al.,* 2015; King, 2016). Scholars stresses that to make headway in achieving important CPDL outcomes; less focus should be placed upon which 'types' of CPDL are on offer and more emphasis should be given to the CPDL processes and what

characterizes them (Rahman *et al.,* 2014; Cordingley, 2015b). This study sought to heed this recommendation. Prior to considering what an effective mentoring CPDL model could look like, it is important to be clear about what characterises transformative CPDL.

### 2.2.1 *Theories and Characteristics of Transformative CPDL: The 'Ideal'*

Given the above criticism that CPDL discourse fails to consider the 'how' of learning (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), it is important to describe those characteristics of CPDL about which there is much consensus. Taylor and Laros (2014) indicate that the focus should be on "anything, pedagogically, that leads to a transformation" (p. 140). The following characteristics, underpinned by an array of learning theories, are each believed to contribute to transformative CPDL outcomes: i) sustained and iterative; ii) situated and experiential; iii) collaborative; iv) personalised and participant-driven; v) reflective: vi) critically consciousness; and vii) empowering.

*i) Sustained and iterative*: It is well accepted that CPDL should be sustained and on going (Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016; Labone and Long, 2016; Brennan, 2017). The duration of teacher learning is directly related to the depth of teacher change (Parker, Patton, Madden and Sinclair, 2010; Parker and Patton, 2017). In a study examining effective CPDL characteristics, sustained and iterative CPDL emerged as important as it offered the scope for repeated and sustained opportunities for teachers to apply, evaluate and adapt their learning in the light of outcomes (Cordingley, 2016). Cordingley (2016) adds that follow up activities should be planned to support CPDL application. Positive outcomes include a greater inclination: to comprehend and invest

in the process; to experience a sense of ownership; and to feel positive about change efforts (Patton and Griffin, 2008; Parker *et al.,* 2010; Murphy and O'Leary, 2012; Parker and Patton, 2017).

*ii) Situated and experiential:* Based on theories of situated learning, 'social constructivism', and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Girvan, Conneely and Tangney, 2016) teacher learning should be situated, experiential and active (Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016; Labone and Long, 2016). Teachers should be engaged in meaningful activities, which can be contextualised to the "processes and problems" that they face in their workday (Glassman and Erdman, 2014, p. 214). An "implementation bridge" (Hall and Hord 2006 cited in King, 2016, p. 578) must be explicitly inbuilt to assist teachers to reconcile their new learning with existing practice in order to prevent them from abandoning what they have learned once they return to school (King, 2016). As per complexity theory thinking (Freire, 1972), embedded CPDL is considered to be more powerful than decontextualized in-service events (Teaching Council, 2016) as it supports the teacher to apply their CPDL in the light of the local complexities (Rahman *et al.,* 2014).

*iii) Collaborative*: The most successful professional learning journeys are founded on the explicit intention to facilitate collaborative engagement (King, 2014; 2016), "not only as a valuable by-product of participation but also as a goal in itself" (Trimble and Lázaro, 2014, p. 128). Building on the work of social learning theorists (Wenger and Snyder, 2000), Guskey (2003) expresses that: "educators at all levels value opportunities to work together, reflect on their practices, exchange ideas, and share strategies and expertise" (Cited in Armour and Yelling, 2004, p. 83). It is asserted that

once teachers collaborate, the developmental foundation on which they stand, has the potential to be higher and they can then build upon a scaffold of generally agreed assumptions to co-generate even deeper understanding (Davis, Ellet and Annunziata, 2003). McCorkel Clinard and Ariav (1998) found that engaging with collaborative professional learning, which was situated led to school cultures becoming more collaborative.

*iv) Personalised and participant driven:* There is an abundance of literature written on the importance of personalised learning (Tannehill *et al.,* 2013; King, 2016). Adopting Deweyan's (1916, 1933) progressive education mindset, Florian (2014) identifies that differentiation and learner centeredness should be at the heart of any CPDL design. The most effective CPDL systems cater for "more participant-led and less provider-driven CPD[L]…allowing considerable teacher autonomy in choice" (Teaching Council, 2010a, p. 22). Being permitted to volunteer to engage in CPDL is important as it provides the teacher with a "sense of choice and volition" (De Charms, 1968 cited in Benita, p. 259-260), which results in greater self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2006; Benita *et al.,* 2013). It is believed that CPDL processes should activate teachers as the directors of applying acquired learning to their given contexts (Brandão, 1981 cited in Sobottka, 2013; Parker and Patton, 2017). Thus, CPDL time should account for "planning change 'back at the ranch'" (Cordingley, Higgins, Greany, Buckler, Coles-Jordan, Crisp, Saunders and Coe, 2015, p. 12).

*v) Reflective*: The importance of reflective practice has been expressed by many

scholars (Goodyear *et al.,* 2013; Attard Tonna, Bjerkholt and Holland, 2017)[14]. Schön (1983) maintains that reflection involves the thoughtful deliberation of one's actions with the aim of extracting knowledge from an event. At a fundamental level, it is a crucial tool for sustaining progress across the career span (Attard Tonna *et al.,* 2017); enacting sustainable change (Freire, 1972; Locke *et al.,* 2013; Cordingley *et al.,* 2015) and challenging prevailing traditions (Attard *et al.,* 2017). Teachers' reflective capacity should be facilitated through target setting and evaluation (Jung, 2012; Goodyear *et al.,* 2013). Where a cyclical follow-up is combined with a focus upon progress and self-mastery (Freeman and Lewis, 1998), teachers are said to be motivated (McNiff, 2013).

*vi) Critical Consciousness*: Paulo Freire's construct of critical consciousness focuses upon social change, and as such it lends itself well to the endeavour of learning (Watts, Diemer and Voight, 2011). Scholars suggest that "consciousness raising" CPDL (Smith *et al.,* 2010, p. 1117), can lead to transformative action and outcomes (Diemer, Rapa, Park, and Perry, 2017). In reference to the works of Freire (1970) and Vio Grossi (1982), Glassman and Erdem (2014) explain that "a tipping point of change" occurs when teachers begin to "question and critique actions", which they once understood as central to their reality (p. 213). Given the complexities inherent in social and situated learning (Rahman *et al.,* 2014; Cothran-Smith *et al.,* 2014), CPDL facilitators should maximise teachers' to work together in order to identify how to mobilise and maximise those resources available to them (Ruechakul, Erawan and Siwarom, 2015). Despite its potential, scholars such as Watts *et al.* (2011) express that the construct deserves more

[14] See ppendix C for the front cover of Attard Tonna *et al.* (2017). This multi-case study reports common findings on how generative mentoring is effective for developing reflective practice, from various perspectives including pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university tutors.

attention in discourse and research.

*vii) Empowering*: The democratic opportunity to experience empowerment should be at the heart of all attempts to learn (Pearse, 1916; Dewey, 1916; Waterworth, Dimmock, Pescud, Braham and Rosenberg, 2016). Empowerment should be facilitated on many levels including: individual (teacher), team (community of practice), organisation (school) and community (profession) (Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015). Initially, the development of knowledge and skills are required for teachers to be empowered as individuals (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Kwang, 2001; Labone and Long, 2016). If teachers are supported to be and feel more expert, they will then feel more individually empowered to share their knowledge (Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam and Laub, 2009; Christens, 2012; Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016). Even when teachers' values and beliefs have evolved, the culture and context of their schools can hinder their capacity to change their practice (Opfer and Pedder 2011; King, 2016). Therefore, high quality facilitation should support teachers to capacity-build, to better ensure the sustainability of their development (Patton and Parker, 2014; Parker and Patton, 2017).

As will be presented later, CPDL provision which utilizes processes that are rich in many CPDL characteristics are more effective (Day and Sachs, 2004). However, given that "the national system of education [has been] such a volatile and emotion-laden topic" in Ireland (Akenson, 2012, p. 2), it is equally important to be conscious of the reality facing CPDL designers. Table 4 reminds the reader of this and of the purpose of section 2.3.

Table 4 Thematic Purpose 2

| ***Literature Themes*** | ***Purpose*** |
|---|---|
| 2. '*The Historical Context*' | Before outlining the recent PD, CPD and CPDL trends in Ireland, the reader must be presented with a picture of how the recent and current system is deeply affected by its history. This section provides a snapshot of how professional challenges were born and offers some explanation for why they prevail. Oscillating between the past and the present is helpful for grasping why the reconceptualisation of SP and its associated expectations are a challenge to the development of professional mentors. From a cultural perspective, this section lays the conceptual groundwork regarding potential barriers which CTs might face as they engage in and with a PALAR M-CoP |

## *2.3 Socio-political and Cultural Issues in the Irish Education System: 'Historical Context'*

### 2.3.1 *Challenges Rooted in the Past*

Sugrue (2002) expresses that "the legacy of the evolution of Irish education with its origins firmly rooted in nineteenth century politics, continues to cast long shadows in the present" (p. 316). Scholars have more recently suggested that such challenges prevail (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). Given that the Irish CPD system has reflected a struggle with change (Harford, 2010; O'Donoghue *et al.,* 2017), understanding these entrenched challenged is important.

Scholars have indicated that the drive to control the Irish education system has had less to do with the sponsorship of education and more to do with ownership and control of it (Clarke, 2011; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). This began with colonial control by the British and progressed to struggles for ownership with Irish nationalists and then, between them and the Catholic Church and then, between the Church and the Irish state

(Clarke, 2011). Post-independence from the occupying force, both the church and then the state were guilty of demonstrating little zeal for developing the education system (Coolahan, 1981). The various landlords of the Irish education system all held ideological positions, which were strongly and widely imposed (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). Therefore, the questioning of authority and 'how things are done', has long been considered taboo and has almost universally been avoided in Ireland (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). Those who try to alter inherent practices tend to be overwhelmed by the challenge, ultimately giving up (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; O'Grady, 2017). This has contributed to a lack of change in the dominant traditional ideologies of the past (Drudy and Lynch, 1993; Waldron, 2004; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). It has manifested itself also in a discomfort with change (Gleeson and O'Donnachain, 2009), as well as complex reactions to sudden educational change (Coolahan, 1981; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011).

### 2.3.2 *Shadows Cast by the Past*

To understand the feasibility of recent proposals for CPDL change, it is important to acknowledge the long held systemic repercussions of Ireland's "chequered history" of education (Coolahan, 2007, p. 2). Whilst many issues were born a long time ago, the endemic struggle with cultural change has led to these issues still having a negative impact upon education and by extension, upon teacher education (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). As such, turning a lens on existing complexities is important (Kania and Kramer, 2013; Lawlor and Zachary, 2016). Whilst five key issues will be put into context throughout the literature review, their existence will now be briefly

outlined.

i) Performative and competitive culture: The colonially imposed 'payments by results system'[15] introduced by British landlords in the 1800s conditioned an entire generation of educators and indeed their pupils to view learning as an act of competition (Walsh, 2013). Whilst the 'payment by results' system no longer exists, the state examination, the 'Leaving Certificate'[16] has similarly led to teachers working performatively and competitively (Hyland 2011; Lynch *et al.*, 2013; Coolahan, 2003). The "overriding influence of the 'points system'" (Lynch *et al.*, 2013, p. 494); a system used for entry to third level institutions, has left teachers feeling "forced to adopt practices dictated by examination pressures" (Hogan *et al.,* 2007, p. 4), thus side-lining "virtues of morality, imagination, enthusiasm, social commitment or creativity" (McDermott, 2012, p. 62). Issues of professional competitiveness are believed to continue to hamper teachers' growth in Ireland (King, 2019).

ii) 'Terrible autonomy' and professional insulation and isolation: During the occupation, 'outsiders coming in' was seen as an unwanted interference in the Irish education system (Farren, 1989). Post-independence, the "intellectual independence" which Dewey (1916) writes about, was advocated for by Padraig Pearse[17] (p. 185). As

[15] During a time of economic suppression and deprivation, the relationship between exam results and extra remuneration became entrenched and a generation of underpaid teachers abandoned their previous drive to develop creative and innovative methodologies (Walsh, 2013).

[16] The 'Leaving Certificate' is a standardised and summative state examination system (Quinn, 2011 cited in Clonan, 2017).

[17] Pearse was a teacher activist, school principal and school founder who fought to overthrow the British Empire's rule in Ireland and was executed without trial in 1916. He rejected British governance in Ireland and referred to its administration of education as the 'murder machine' (Walsh, 2013).

a result, the hunger, demand for and protection of autonomy in Ireland has become a thing of legend (Coolahan, 2003; Ó'Ruairc, 2015a). Ireland's teacher education system is characterised by a "private nature" (Lortie, 1975 cited in Conway *et al.,* 2009, p. 44). A 'secret garden culture' has led to teachers reluctance to share and work with others (OECD, 2006, p. i). This autonomy has led over-time, to a "prevalence of professional insulation" (Teaching Council, 2010a, p. 26) and professional isolation (Aitken and Harford, 2011; O'Grady, 2017). Whilst Physical Education [PE] teachers have come to "enjoy a high level of flexibility and autonomy" (Halbert and MacPhail, 2010, p. 33), isolation has been considered "an unwelcomed form of autonomy" for them in particular (Tannehill *et al.,* 2013, p. 160).

iii) Poor culture of teacher evaluation: Since the Church was forced to relent and permit state inspectors to enter schools (Farren, 1989), teachers' relationship with teacher evaluation has been wrought with anxiety (Coolahan, 1981). For a long time, teachers were known to be quite uncooperative, making inspectors feel unwelcome inside the gates of the school (Coolahan, 1981), a concern sometimes still expressed by UTs (Hall *et al.,* 2018). Until recent times, there has been a low inspectorate presence in Irish schools (OECD, 2006). Negative attitudes to the inspectorate continue to exist (Gassner *et al.*, 2010; Ó'Ruairc, 2014). Moreover, not only have teachers not been encouraged to question the system, they have also "not been encouraged to question the nature and purpose of their [own] practice" (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011, p. 475). A fear of and reluctance to engage in teacher evaluation has been the outcome (Hogan *et al.,* 2007; Sugrue, 2013; Khan, 2015).

iv) Union protectionism: Throughout the British occupation of Ireland, teachers went from enjoying a position of fairly high status to being "treated in a rather perfunctory manner" (Coolahan, 1981, p. 30), "often paid less than their English counterparts" (Walsh, 2013, p. 59). Consequently, since the foundation of the state, and since teacher unions were founded[18], working conditions and pay have continued to be a bone of contention. Unions are strong and powerful (Gleeson 2010; Harford and O'Doherty, 2016), an issue which is not isolated to Ireland (Kangsen and Scammell Rodrigues, 2010). Historically, they have been well organised and driven to protect teachers' working conditions (Coolahan, 2003; Gleeson 2010). Parallels can be seen with the assertiveness of Scotland and Northern Ireland's teacher unions, who were also driven to gain control and independence (Alexandrou, 2009; Stevenson, 2014). Unions in Wales, England (Stevenson, 2014), the US (Chase, 1999) and the EU (Giddens *et al.* 2006) have been more marginalised by governments and as a result, have adopted social partnership and 'new unionism' approaches. Whilst such systems might be envious of Ireland's collective bargaining strength, they do not always appreciate that the zealousness with which such unions protect teachers has not always been good for teachers' CPDL (Poole, 2000; Bascia, 2001). In their drive to fight for economic stability and working conditions, unions have a tendency to ignore the 'other half of teaching', failing to protect the CPDL needs of teachers (Kerchner, Koppich, and Weeres, 1995; Stevenson, 2014). Robertson (1992) insists that particularly during eras of political or economic unrest, unions' protective clarion to cease all work in excess of teaching has been detrimental to CPDL. There is a history of professional learning opportunities being discontinued on the premise that "it would be 'unfair' to ask

[18] There are two post-primary secondary school unions. In 1909, the 'Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland' (ASTI) and in 1923, the Teachers Union of Ireland' (TUI) were founded respectively.

teachers to do ‘extra’ work beyond contractually defined time and tasks” (Bascia, 2001, p. 10).

v) Policy Rhetoric: Over time educational leaders have been accused of allowing policies to “wobble” and implementation to “lag” (Coolahan, 2009, 2004, p. 9). In the changeover of education ministers, ambitious plans have been known to fall between the political cracks (O’Grady, 2017). Policy makers have been criticised for ignoring previous recommendations, when they return to the business of policy reconceptualisation (O’Grady, 2017). Coolahan (2007) acclaims: “it seemed as if one was starting anew, from a clean sheet position” (p. 17). The Teaching Council (2013) were also accused of this with respect to the SP guidelines (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; O’Grady, 2017). In the Irish psyche, is a collective memory of teachers who suffer their change efforts being interrupted and even abandoned (Harford, 2010). With respect to teacher evaluation, whilst some progress is evident, there is a culture of resistance in Ireland (Sugrue, 2012). This has implications not only for SP provision, but also for CTs’ CPDL.

This above historical context is important to keep in mind when exploring the more recent landscape regarding trends in traditional PD engagement and provision. Table 5 reminds the reader of the purpose of section 2.4.

Table 5 Thematic Purpose 3.

| ***Literature Themes*** | ***Purpose*** |
|---|---|
| 3. '*The Recent Context*' | In order to grasp the sea-change associated with the guidelines on SP and their associated CPDL implications, it is important to first outline the PD trends in Ireland from a participation, as well as a provision perspective. Highlighting the inadequacies of the traditional PD model helps one to comprehend how past experiences can act as a barrier to CPDL engagement. It is also useful for estimating the degree to which the proposed CPDL model is fit for purpose. |

## *2.4 Teacher Education Policy in Ireland: 'Recent Context'*

### 2.4.1 *CPDL: Engagement Trends*

Though CPD has been "the subject of extended debate" for many decades (Clarke and Killeavy 2012, p. 131), we have known for some time that "Ireland has much catching up to do" when compared with countries of similar population and wealth (Hogan *et al.*, 2007, p. 83). Lynch *et al.* (2013) maintain that the "provision for structured, in-career professional development for teachers remains problematic" (p. 497).

Though the 'Cosán Framework for Teacher Learning' outlined that the renewal of teacher registration will be reliant upon engagement in CPDL (Teaching Council, 2013), this has yet to take effect (McMillan *et al.,* 2016). In the absence of more recent robust evidence (Clonan, 2017), findings from the OECD (2009)[19] 'Teaching and

[19] This study collected data on 25 European Union member countries.

Learning in Schools' (TALIS) study are drawn upon to present a picture of CPD engagement. In this OECD (2009) survey, 90% of participating teachers in Ireland stated that they engaged in 'some CPD[L]' in the 18 months prior to the data being collected (Shiel *et al.,* 2009). The average number of days that teachers in Ireland engaged in and with CPD was 6 days, a figure amongst the lowest in the study (Steen and Scheerens, 2010). 41% (versus 51% average) of all reported CPD was deemed compulsory (Shiel, Perkins and Gilleece, 2009; Gilleece, Shiel, Perkins and Proctor, 2009). Out of the nine CPD activities surveyed, Ireland was below the TALIS average in all categories with one exception. The activities which Ireland's teachers predominantly engaged most with, were some of the least collaborative and / or sustained activities and those they engaged least with, were the most collaborative and / sustained activities (Steens and Sheerens, 2010). The perceived marginalized status of PE has been identified as a significant roadblock to CPDL engagement (Parker *et al.*, 2012). In Ireland, post-primary teachers are qualified to teach two subjects. Because, the second subject (accompanying PE) tends to be an examinable subject, PE teachers are said to overlook PE-CPDL, preferring instead to engage in and with CPDL for their second subject.

### 2.4.2 *CPDL: Provision and Model Trends and Inadequacies*

Though the Teaching Council has developed of an array of CPD initiatives, it is believed that there is varying awareness of the Cosán Framework on the ground (Teaching Council, 2018). Whilst there are more opportunities for CPDL than ever

before, both generally[20] and for PE teachers[21]; more should not be perceived as better (Sugrue, 2003; Teaching Council, 2010). As Taylor and Laros (2014) stated: "all that glimmers is not gold" (p. 136). Despite having a mature evidence base about CPDL, this knowledge has not been used effectively to inform and improve the models which are being adopted in Ireland or abroad (Armour, Makopoulou and Chambers, 2012; European Commission; 2014; Cordingley, 2015a; Armour *et al.,* 2015). Cordingley's (2016) systematic review of CPDL literature uncovered that "we have been making the same mistakes with regard to teachers' learning that we were making ten years ago about pupils' learning" (p. 12). Armour *et al.* (2015) claim: "something is amiss with either the goals themselves, the process, the providers or the teachers" (p. 1).

The quality of Ireland's CPDL provision is said to be in need of much improvement (Teaching Council, 2010a; Brennan, 2017). In Ireland, though the term CPD is currently being promoted, traditionally, it has most commonly been referred to as 'in-service' training, and more recently PD; a term which has become synonymous with 'system needs' (Hogan *et al.,* 2007). The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) which is funded by the Department of Education and Skills, sets the CPD agenda (Brennan, 2017). Reflecting the 'reality' more than the 'ideal', CPDL models on offer in Ireland tend to be "narrowly defined, lacking in theoretical basis, and rolled out in stops and starts rather than in any coherent or sustainable way" (Harford, 2010, p. 335). Based on reports, CPDL providers in Ireland tend to adopt the

[20] Cosán, the Croí series including the John Coolahan Research Support Framework, and the FEILTE Conference, both of which will be expanded upon later.

[21] The following support services have facilitated PE teachers' practice: The Junior Cycle Physical Education Support Service (JCPESS: 2003); The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST: 2010) as a cross-sector, multi-disciplinary support service for teachers (DES, 2011); The PDST PE group works with regional education centres and the Physical Association of Ireland (PEAI) (Halbert and MacPhail, 2010).

more outdated features of traditional international models, including but not limited to Guskey (2002), Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), Desimone, (2009) and Evans (2014). Kennedy's (2014) research found that on a CPDL spectrum, ranging from transmissive, to malleable and transformative (See figure 2-1 below), Ireland's CPDL pattern of provision reflected that of a 'transmissive' model (Kennedy, 2014; ASTI, 2010).

Figure 2-1 Spectrum of CPDL Models

| Purpose of Model | Examples of models of CPD which may fit within this category |
|---|---|
| Transmissive | Training models<br>Deficit models<br>Cascade model |
| Malleable | Award-bearing models<br>Standards-based models<br>Coaching/mentoring models<br>Community of practice models |
| Transformative | Collaborative professional inquiry models |

Increasing capacity for professional autonomy and teacher agency

(Kennedy, 2014, p. 693).

Despite widespread recognition for concepts such as learner-centredness (progressive education theory: Dewey, 1916), autonomy (self-determination theory: Deci and Ryan, 1987) and empowerment (empowerment theory: Zimmerman, 2000), the dominant model tends to prioritises system (Lynch *et al.,* 2013; Kennedy, 2014; Patton and Parker, 2015) policy (Brennan, 2017) and curricular (Harford, 2010) needs over that of the individual teacher (Patton *et al.,* 2013). Flouting the lessons from situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), complexity (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), and critical theory (Freire, 1972), CPDL facilitators too often offer disconnected (Boylan *et al.,* 2018), 'one-size-fits all' (Patton *et al.,* 2013), discrete events (Glenn *et al.,* 2012), at off-site locations (Armour, 2010), which neither afford teachers the opportunity to reflect on pedagogical

practice (Harford, 2010), nor the time and space to grapple with the complexities of implementing their CPDL. Transmissive models (ASTI, 2010; Kennedy; 2014), using one-directional approaches to content delivery (Parker and Patton, 2017), tend to treat teachers as passive recipients (Olesen and Nordentoft, 2013; Patton *et al.,* 2015), ignoring the power of social and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Williams-Newball, 2014). The approach leans heavily towards a "technical adjustment of practice" which prevents the possibility of "deeper change" (Granville, 2005, p. 52), capacity building (McMillan *et al.,* 2016; Granville, 2005) and transformative outcomes (Glenn *et al.,* 2012). CPDL designers, who sign off on centrally pre-designed models, fail teachers by simply expecting them to adjust their practice and attitude in accordance with pre-specified CPDL outcomes (Rahman *et al.,* 2014).

The Teaching Council director recognised that CPDL has not been valued to the extent that it should be in Ireland (Ó'Ruairc, 2015b) and that teachers have not engaged fully with it (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2009). This is unsurprising in light of the above description. Despite the plethora of research both nationally and internationally, which highlights its deficiencies, this traditional model remains dominant in Ireland (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Brennan, 2017). With each inadequate CPDL experience; teachers' low expectations are reinforced (Cordingley, 2015a; 2016). This has long-term implications, as teachers who have not experienced success become disenfranchised (Sugrue, 2002), disengage (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011; Goodyear *et al.,* 2013) and less inclined to engage again (McMillan *et al.,* 2016). Therefore, Armour *et al.* (2015) maintain that the potential 'effectiveness' of CPDL should be considered in the light of "the contextual challenges which teachers face (p. 5). Making this leap is crucial, because where a poor culture of engaging in CPD exists,

teachers are less inclined to seek out and engage in their own learning and development (McMillan *et al.,* 2016).

With the context thoroughly considered, it is necessary to consider the new SP expectations, which have implications for stakeholders and indeed CPDL providers. The purpose of section 2.5 is outlined below in Table 6.

Table 6 Thematic Purpose 4.

| ***Literature Themes*** | ***Purpose*** |
|---|---|
| *4. 'New Expectations'* | Before considering a CPDL model for mentoring and SP, it is prudent to identify the significant changes to the role of the CTs under the new guidelines. Links will be made back to historical issues as well as recent trends in order to explore the gaps and challenges for developing mentors. In addition to the socio-cultural barriers, challenges brought about by the fiscal crisis and austerity imposing measures will be explored. This section aims to highlight the potential challenges which must be considered in the design of a CPDL model for developing mentors in Ireland. |

## *2.5 Reconceptualization of School Placement and CPDL: 'New Expectations'*

### 2.5.1 *Policy Overload*

When the 2009 PISA results placed Ireland in a poor light, the 'soft power' of the OECD led to a "perfect storm" (Conway, 2013, p. 52), creating a "policy window" (Smith, 2012, p. 84) for policy makers to reconceptualise teacher education policy. This opportunity led to teacher education reforms being planned

at a rate never seen before in Ireland (O'Doherty, 2014; Kirwan and Hall, 2016; O'Donoghue *et al.,* 2017). The 'Teaching Council Act' (2001, Section 7 [2b]), outlined that the Teaching Council, a statutory, regulatory body, would "establish, publish, review and maintain codes of professional conduct for teachers, which [would] include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence" (Government of Ireland, 2001, cited in Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012, p. 96). The Teaching Council (2011) proposed that "fresh thinking [should be] applied to teacher education with the aim of renewing and improving it" (p. 8).

In quick succession, the Teaching Council published a raft of key documents including: the 'Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education' (2011); the 'Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers' (2012)' and the 'Guidelines on School Placement' (2013)[22]. Publications saw a "radical reconceptualization and restructuring" of the continuum of teacher education (Harford and O'Doherty, 2016, p. 37). It represented "a move…towards a life-long approach to teacher development" (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012, p. 97). In particular, the implications for SP were perceived to be "quite a major overhaul to current approaches" in Ireland (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012, p. 97) and many have suggested that they were too giant a leap for the current system to manage (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; Harford and O'Doherty, 2016; O'Doherty *et al.,* 2017; O'Grady, 2017). As will be explained, the Teaching Council (2013) SP guidelines were not welcomed by all (O'Grady, 2017).

[22] Several other publications and initiatives were released after this study was conducted, for example: Cosán and Céis.

Whilst some acknowledged the "air of urgency" to the Teaching Council's attempt to tackle the issues of fragmentation in teacher education in Ireland (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012, p. 97), the director himself recognises the potential challenge to the pace of proposed change, stating: "many of us and our colleagues have this sense that there is too much change going on, that we need to pause and dial it down" (Ó'Ruairc, 2015a, p. 5). This policy overload is seen as a significant barrier to engagement in and with SP guidelines (O'Grady, 2017; Teaching Council, 2018).

Before a potential CPDL model for CTs is presented, it is prudent to highlight what the literature offers about how changing expectations pose a challenge to partnership universities, schools and CTs, in particular. Attention will be paid to the Teaching Council publications mentioned above, which make reference to SP associated CPD. The challenges posed by new expectations will be presented in the light of the afore-introduced socio-cultural shadows and literature pertaining to the CPD trends in Ireland.

### 2.5.2 *School Placement: The CPDL Challenge of Changing Expectations*

The Teaching Council (2016) acknowledges that the formalisation of changing expectations would see "a degree of cultural change for registered teachers and for the education system" (p. 25). Though it is accepted that progress is afoot, complex challenges remain (Hall *et al.*, 2018; Teaching Council, 2018). An analysis of the Teaching Council policy (2011), professional code (2012) and SP guidelines (2013) led to the identification of a number of professional expectations, which past SP

experiences and associated CPD trends have arguably not prepared the profession for[23]. These challenging professional expectations include enhanced and increased levels of: i) collegiality and professional dialogue; ii) partnership and; iii) teacher evaluation. These challenges will be delved into further with respect to the particular barriers, which they pose to the three CPDL processes in this study: mentoring, CoPs and PALAR. However, for the purpose of clarity, how these challenges cause general CPDL roadblocks must first be briefly outlined.

i) Collegiality and professional dialogue: The Teaching Council (2011; 2012; 2013; 2016; 2018; 2020) identifies collaboration as being central to the continuum at all phases. Teachers are prompted to engage in collaboration with colleagues, PSTs on SP and university tutors [UTs] (Teaching Council, 2011, 2012; 2013). They are directed to share their expertise and experience (Teaching Council, 2011, 2012, 2013). The Teaching Council (2011, 2012, 2013) guides teachers to engage in professional dialogue with the above partners. However, on account of the privatist nature of the Irish education system (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Teaching Council, 2018) and the aforementioned secret garden syndrome (OECD, 2006), collaboration is considered to be uncommon (Teaching Council, 2010a; Conway *et al.,* 2013; Teaching Council, 2018). There is typically "little or no culture of teachers sharing" with one another (Clonan, 2017, p. 22) and where this does occur, it has been described as superficial (Teaching Council, 2010a). Brennan (2017) indicates that "the traditional privatised practice of teaching provides a challenge in encouraging teachers to discuss and share practice" (p. 73). Professional dialogue in schools is considered to be quite rare, and

[23] Cosán is not referenced here as it had not been launched at the time of this study being conducted.

where it has been found, it is informal and lacking in pedagogic focus (Teaching Council, 2010a; Lynch *et al.,* 2013). Additionally, in Ireland, teacher identity is said to be significantly tied to subject specific expertise (Sugrue *et al.,* 2001; Gleeson 2012; Lynch, 2013). In the performative 'race for the points', competition between subject department colleagues is unlikely to enhance subject specialist dialogue (Hyland 2011 cited in Lynch *et al.,* 2013). As a result, the "culture of increasing performativity" and competitiveness makes teachers' capacity to engage deeply with their own learning more challenging (King, 2016, p. 579).

ii) Partnership: The reconceptualization of teacher education in Ireland has placed the concept of partnership under the spotlight (Harford and O'Doherty, 2016; O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018; Teaching Council, 2020). The Teaching Council (2013) promotes the adoption of a "partnership approach" in the provision of SP (p. 3) with shared responsibility increasingly promoted between the school and the university (Sahlberg, 2012; Young and MacPhail, 2015; Hall *et al.,* 2018). If one considers Jones, Hobbs, Kenny, Campbell, Chittleborough, Gilbert, Herbert and Redman's (2016) 'partnership embeddedness model', Ireland typically sits at the 'connective' end of the spectrum as opposed to the 'generative' or 'transformative' end of the spectrum. At the connective end of the partnership embeddedness model, the purpose is more shallow, short term and opportunistic, with less partnership expectation and less opportunity and appreciation for mutual reflection and inquiry (Jones *et al.,* 2016; O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018).

Historically, relationships between schools and universities have been considered informal (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Harford and O'Doherty, 2016) and ad hoc (Harford and

O'Doherty, 2016). The goodwill of teachers and schools has been relied upon for SP (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Hall *et al.,* 2018). However, too often this goodwill is characterized by the handing over of lessons to the PST for the duration of the SP (Harford and O'Doherty, 2016; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Relationships have been under-developed, with evidence of minimal interaction between UTs and CTs (Young and MacPhail, 2015). O'Grady (2017) also reports the view from some principals, who perceived that the appetite to develop a partnership was not shared by the universities. Scholars have also indicated that the Teaching Council (2013) overestimated the desire of UTs to engage meaningfully with schools and CTs (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; Sugrue, 2013). Sugrue (2013) claims that in the age of performativity, time spent developing partnerships comes second to research output and the pressure of publishing papers. This leads to, as Clarke *et al.* (2012) found, a fragmented school university partnership. It must be considered that a lack of "readiness-for-partnership" (Ní Áingléis, 2009, p. 84), combined with an incompatible socio-cultural history (O'Grady, 2017), can lead to collegiality feeling "imposed" or "forced" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 166). This can result in teachers feeling resentful and exerting resistance to change (Hargreaves, 1994; O'Grady, 2017).

iii) Teacher evaluation: Under the banner of 'critical evaluation', teachers are expected to demonstrate a criticality about and through their practice (Teaching Council, 2010; 2012). They are expected to support colleagues (Teaching Council, 2011; 2012) and PSTs (Teaching Council, 2013) to become critically reflective. However, Conway *et al.*'s (2011) exploration of professional cultures in Irish schools found that "the dominant professional culture […] is that of the autonomous professional" (p. 28). As such, the examination of one's practice has not been meaningfully promoted or

developed traditionally (Hogan *et al.,* 2007; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). Of the nine OECD surveyed CPD activities, Ireland fared poorly with respect to engagement in and with peer observation (eighteen-point-two%). The practice of providing feedback for colleagues is considered to be very uncommon in Ireland (Gilleece *et al.,* 2009; Teaching Council, 2010a). Lack of engagement may be attributed to teachers' complaint that their evaluation experiences were unhelpful (OECD, 2009). Where feedback quality is poor, the perceived usefulness of the process is undermined (Keeping and Levy, 2000 cited in Delvaux, Vanhoof, Tuytens, Vekeman, Devos and Van Petegema, 2013; Heneman and Milanowski, 2003). Due to the traditional inexperience with external and internal teacher evaluation (OECD, 2009), it is said that a fear of evaluation has developed in Ireland generally (Ó'Ruairc, 2014) and for PE teachers (O'Sullivan, 2006). This anxiety is exacerbated by the more recent accountability agenda (Fullan, 2007 cited in Brennan, 2017). During ITE, "opportunities for reflective practice […] vary according to individual teacher education programmes" (Dolan, 2012, p. 473). Scholars argue that whilst critical reflection has been uncritically accepted as a neutral and benign practice (Cushion, 2018), power imbalances (Meegan, Dunning, Belton and Woods, 2013) can leave teachers feeling uncomfortable in both offering it and receiving it. Approaches to critical reflection need to be critiqued with respect to not only how they perpetuate challenges of power and politics but also how they can be adjusted to overcome them (Habermas, 1971).

### 2.5.3 *Austerity: Economic and Political Roadblocks to Goodwill and CPDL Motivation*

The OECD (2009) teacher education findings which were presented above do not reflect the decade long impact, which austerity measures have had upon CPD provision and engagement in Ireland (Sugrue, 2011). Therefore, it is prudent to describe the challenges posed by the fiscal crisis, which perhaps hindered the investment in structures and processes, which were necessary to meet the raft of recent professional expectations. O'Grady (2017) acknowledges that whilst cultural factors play a significant role as to whether teachers adopt new professional expectations, "practical dynamics" are just as significant in determining whether or not teachers engage (p. 55).

With respect to the SP guidelines, the Teaching Council (2013) reminds the profession that historically, there has been a commitment "to engaging in the process of teacher education" (p. 10) and that teachers should "give generously of their time and experience" (p. 7). However, teachers were asked to engage in these more formalised and structured guidelines at a time of major political and economic upheaval (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012). The austerity imposing 'Croke Park' and 'Haddington Road' agreements resulted in the erosion of working conditions (ASTI, 2014). A whole battery of assaults were committed on the profession such as unprecedented cuts, limited resources, fluid contracts, redeployment and redundancy threats (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012). O'Grady (2017) added that greater workload; a moratorium on posts of responsibility in 2009; and increases in substitution and supervision hours has led to teachers' struggling to apply guidelines (O'Grady, 2017). In the absence of a serious commitment to partnership to tackle staffing, funding, resourcing and time constraints,

goodwill is said to have further dissipated (Clonan, 2017; O'Grady, 2017), an issue shared by PE teachers (Clonan, 2017), as well as teachers beyond Ireland (Means, 2013). This is challenging given that teacher responsibility is increasingly judged based on the degree to which they show willingness (Means, 2013).

A lack of responsibility for implementation planning was demonstrated by key stakeholders with the universities blaming the Teaching Council and the Teaching Council blaming the universities (O'Grady, 2017). Mulcahy and McSharry (2012) questioned whether universities could afford to invest in SP. Others accused the Department of Education and Skills of "hiding behind the Council" and abdicating their responsibility to tangibly support SP and CPD (Sugrue, 2012, p. 163). Harford and O'Doherty (2016) believe that the "scalability of the project being promoted" was not considered in the design of the implementation plan (p. 47).

Teacher unions responded as strongly as always. The Teachers' Union of Ireland [TUI] (2011) in particular stipulated: "in the absence of…sufficient resources to support implementation TUI may be forced to advocate non-cooperation by its members" (Cited in O'Grady, 2017, p. 24-25). When a ban on what was termed 'voluntary activities' was published by the ASTI (2013), adherence to the guidelines became challenging as meetings and CPD, whether nationally mandated or otherwise were listed (ASTI, 2013). Moreover, when the 'Croke Park Agreement' was being negotiated and the activities beyond teaching which should be legitimised for the extra 33 working hours were decided, they failed to list 'undergraduate mentoring' as one of the accepted activities.

The recent changes to SP, whilst disruptive, have created a teacher education opportunity where positive disequilibrium can trigger change (Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014). In order to support the implementation of the SP guidelines and to design mentor CPDL, all of the above issues, both historical, recent and current need to be carefully considered. This study sought to develop a CPDL 'meta-model' that included transformative activities and processes, embedded within a complex system. It was hoped that this would assist teachers to benefit from their CPDL as mentors, and would help them to embed the SP guidelines within a potential culture of resistance. Table 7 maps the literature in section 2.6, which proposes a new direction for CPDL.

Table 7 Thematic Purpose 5

| ***Literature Themes*** | ***Purpose*** |
|---|---|
| *5. New Directions* | This final section will draw upon the above themes to put forth a CPDL model which, as is necessary, takes a new direction. This final section presents a multi-learning process model for consideration as a high quality CPDL model for the development of a mentoring and SP culture. The potential benefits of three learning processes are offered: mentoring, communities of practice [CoP] and participatory action learning action research [PALAR]. The ideal scenario for each learning process is outlined. Additionally, the barriers posed to teachers' engagement in each process are clarified. It is suggested that because each learning process is rich in high quality CPDL characteristics, a combined model is more effective than the sum of its parts. |

### *2.6 Proposed Effective CPDL Model: 'New Directions'*

Brennan (2017) maintains that the reconceptualisation of CPDL models must exceed expectations of the past. Many PE-CPD processes are offered in the literature.[24] Whilst different types offer different outcomes, "no one means of learning will in itself, be sufficient but rather that a range of learning opportunities will need to be available" (Day, 2004, p. 123). This research extends Day's (2004) thinking to propose that traditional CPDL models should be replaced by meta-models (Boylan *et al.*, 2018). It is proposed that a multidimensional, tailored approach to meta-design (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008), which adopts and adapts multiple theories (Waters and Loton, 2019) and pedagogies (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008, p. 3) could result in transformative outcomes for CTs. The 'Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning' promotes engagement in a range of CPD processes (Teaching Council, 2016). This conceptual shift is reflected in the framework's promotion of 'learning processes' and 'teacher learning dimensions'. The learning dimensions and processes, as illustrated in Figures 2-2 and 2-3, are inherent in the three CPDL learning processes utilized in this study: mentoring, CoPs and PALAR. These processes and dimensions are illustrated below in figures 2-2 and 2-3:

[24] Regular attendance at workshops, conference attendance, engaging in staff CPD programmes, reading educational books and journal articles, completing further education courses and sustaining professional relationships beyond their school (Tannehill, van der Mars, and Macphail, 2015 cited in Armour *et al.,* 2015); self-reflection, action research, coaching practices, networking with others but to name a few (Nabhania, O'Day Nicolas, and Bahous, 2014 cited in Parker and Patton, 2017).

Figure 2-2 Learning Dimensions

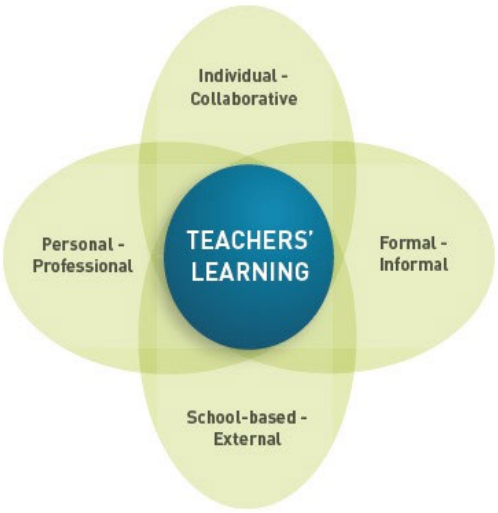



Figure 2-3 Learning Processes


The following section will explore these learning processes in more detail, examining the potential benefits, whilst also mapping the contextual barriers at play.

### 2.6.1 *'Mentoring': as a CPDL Process*

Research foci investigating mentoring have spanned many areas (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). Most mentoring related research in Ireland has focused upon

induction mentoring as opposed to ITE (Killeavy and Maloney, 2010; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Until the work of Belton, Woods, Dunning, and Meegan (2010), there had not "been published work carried out in this area [e.g. ITE mentoring] specific to PE" in Ireland (p. 142). Recently, more PE mentoring specific research has been conducted (Tannehill and Moran, 2007; Chambers, 2009; Kelly and Tannehill, 2012; Chambers *et al.,* 2015; Young *et al.*, 2015).

#### 2.6.1.1 Definition and Importance of mentoring

Zachary (2005) defines mentoring as "a reciprocal learning relationship in which mentoring partners agree to a partnership in which they work collaboratively toward achieving mutually defined goals that focus on developing mentees' skills, abilities, knowledge, and/or thinking" (p. 76). The central role of the mentor is to "support all" PSTs "in discovering the teacher within or in transforming themselves from non-teacher into teacher" (Malderez, Hobson, Tracey and Kerr, 2007, p. 239). O'Grady (2017) lists the ways in which a mentor contributes to teacher education, as found by Clarke *et al.* (2014). They act as: "1) providers of feedback 2) gatekeepers of the profession 3) modelers of practice 4) supporters of reflection 5) gleaners of knowledge 6) purveyors of context 7) conveners of relation 8) agents of socialization 9) advocates of the practical 10) abiders of change and 11) teachers of children" (p. 49).

Scholars suggest that the roles which the mentor performs are plentiful, overlapping and ever evolving based upon: the point in time, the needs of the PST and the ways in which they interact with one another (Ambrosetti and Dekkers, 2010; Ambrosetti, Dekkers and Knight, 2017). The working definition of mentoring sits along a

continuum of engagement, with different mentors and programmes having a particular starting point, with particular intended outcomes (Tang and Lin Choi, 2005).

Mentoring is valued across the teacher education continuum (Henning *et al.,* 2015). With respect to SP, researchers have maintained that mentoring either is (Tedder and Lawy, 2009) or should be a central process in every programme (Chambers *et al.,* 2012). Indeed, where a PST has a positive mentoring experience, they are more inclined to want to mentor others (Kelly and Tannehill, 2012; Chambers *et al.,* 2015). However, it is important to note that the capacity for stakeholders to reap the rewards of mentorship, is dependent upon many factors. A significant such determinant is the mentoring model which is adopted, promoted and facilitated.

#### 2.6.1.2 Evolution of Mentoring Models

Over the years, much research has been conducted beyond Ireland on various mentoring styles (Ehrich, 2008) and paradigms (Allen and Eby, 2010; Chambers *et al.,* 2015). Whilst each model of the past has something to offer to varying degrees and at different points in a PST's journey, each one alone has been considered incomplete. There is increasing consensus that top-down, hierarchical mentoring approaches of the past are not appropriate (Ambrosetti and Dekkers, 2010; Jones and Brown, 2011; Van Ginkel *et al.,* 2016; Ambrosetti *et al.,* 2017). They are also deemed to not be productive or developmental enough (Wang and Odell, 2002 cited in Tang and Lin Choi, 2005). Additionally, models with a strong socialisation function, serve to prop up cultural norms (Mullens, 2005 cited in Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; Chambers *et al.,* 2015) and fail to support critical inquiry, the co-generation of knowledge or partnership

development (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011, p. 466). "*Judgementoring*" which is associated with the competency model (Lejonberg, Elstad and Christophersen, 2015, p. 152) is now considered to be "ineffectual and even harmful" for the PST's growth (Hobson, 2016, p. 88). Whitehead and Fitzgerald (2006) refer to the evolution of 'generative mentoring models'[25].

Van Ginkel *et al.* (2016) suggest that mentors who hold a developmental conception (thus adopting the generative model) are more inclined to see the learning potential of mentoring for themselves than those who hold an instrumental conception (thus adopting cognitive apprenticeship or competence models). 'Engagement mentoring' processes engage partners in higher levels of self-determinism and democratic participation (Colley, 2003; Tedder and Lawy, 2009). Educative mentors are increasingly expected to challenge traditional norms by fostering co-inquiry and collaboration (Wang and Odell, 2002 cited in Van Ginkel *et al.,* 2016). Instead of merely evaluating lesson planning, they engage in co-planning (Shulman, 1993); and discuss learning intentions and their logic with their PST (Whitehead and Fitzgerald, 2006). As such, engaging more collaboratively with their PST, multi-directional

[25] , Whilst the term generative has been adopted, this model of mentoring is sometimes referred to as growth oriented (Mullen, 2010), developmental, educative (Van Ginkel, 2016), or engagement (Tedder and Lawy, 2009) mentoring.

learning is experienced (McCorkel and Clinard, 1998), and more benefits can be accrued.

#### 2.6.1.3 Potential Benefits of Generative Models

Tang and Lin Choi (2005) explain how important it is to raise an understanding of how mutually inclusive the benefits of developmental mentoring can be for the various SP partners. Given the scope of the literature review, more detail will be provided about benefits for the mentor. The benefits which other partners can accrue will be presented very briefly, but predominantly in the light of how these benefits may also be helpful to the mentor.

i) Mentor benefits: Whilst there is a growing evidence base proposing that mentoring is beneficial for mentors (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Tang and Lin Choi, 2005; Thorndike Gusic and Milner, 2008; Hobson *et al.,* 2009), the evidence base is much smaller than that related to PST benefits (Crutcher and Naseem, 2016). McCorkel Clinard and Ariav (1998) pose the question: "why would cooperating teachers become mentors, invest in a time-consuming coaching process, and commit themselves to reforming their pedagogy?" (p. 93). There is some indication in Ireland, that benefits can be accrued by the mentor[26] (Belton *et al.,* 2010; Young and MacPhail, 2015), though there is still a gap in the literature (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; O'Grady, 2017). Where benefits are reported, they are somewhat surface level, for example: the PST's presence being a

[26] In Ireland, at the ITE phase of the continuum, the mentor is referred to as a 'cooperating teacher'. The "cooperating teacher is a teacher in the placement school who supports and guides the [PST] and who acts as a point of contact between the university and the school" (Teaching Council, 2013, p. 5).

"breath of fresh air" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 117). Awareness of the potential benefits for the mentor are rarely acknowledged (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012). However, there is some progress occurring in the field (Hall *et al.,* 2018).

Through engagement in and with the generative mentoring models, there is greater opportunity to engage in professional dialogue and to collaborate within a triad (D'Amato and Quinn, 200l; McCorkel Clinard and Ariav, 1998). Multi-directional learning which is characteristic of educative mentoring, allows for the sharing of new ideas, activities and pedagogical strategies (Young and MacPhail, 2015). As educative mentoring places the mentor as a co-learner (Feiman-Nemser, 2012 cited in Van Ginkel *et al.,* 2016) and co-thinker rather than expert, they become more of an "educational companion" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 20). Therefore, as they co-construct knowledge, reciprocal mutual learning occurs (Van Ginkel *et al.,* 2016; Chambers *et al.,* 2011). Mentors are more inclined to adopt an inquiry position (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Orland-Barak, 2010 cited in Van Ginkel *et al.,* 2016). A mutual outcome of such practice helps both partners to recognise and articulate their knowledge, thus increasing their tacit knowledge (Loughran, 2002; Whitehead and Fitzgerald, 2006). Generative mentoring builds upon the 'reflective mentoring model', and as such leads mentors to reflect more on their practices (Young and MacPhail, 2015; Van Ginkel *et al.,* 2016).

ii) Secondary Benefits: [PST]: There is an abundance of literature written about the benefits of a novice being supported by a mentor (Wrote and Waite, 2009; Crasborn, Hennissen, Brouwer, Korthagen and Bergen, 2010). Mentors nurture a "zone of 'pedagogical construction" facilitating the PST to regenerate their practice in the light of the current context (Graham, 2006; Van Ginkel *et al.,* 2016). It is believed that such

mentoring can help PSTs to overcome the threat of washout (Zeichner, 1987), as well as assisting them to better cross the theory-practice bridge (Caena, 2014; O'Grady, 2017). As the mentor engages in 'growth oriented mentoring' (Dweck, 2006 cited in Mullen, 2010; Zachery, 2009), they play a crucial role in supporting the PST to be a career long participant in reflective professionalism (Dykmore and Harrison, 2006). In turn, this helps them to cope with change, weaknesses and failures in an innovative and productive way (Mullen, 2010). Achieving the above is important to mentors because PSTs tend to make more progress more quickly (D'Amato and Quinn 2002). Given that mentors can learn from their PST (Jones *et al.,* 2016), the sooner they progress, the more the mentor can benefit.

iii) Secondary Benefits: Organisational (school): Scholars have reported the benefits of mentoring for the school (Zachery, 2009; Mullen, 2010). In a review comparing exceptional schools with strong schools, Bell and Cordingley (2014) found exceptional schools to encourage and support the process of developmental mentoring. Where the generative model is well established, a school is more inclined to develop into what is described as a 'Professional Development School' (Winitzky, Stoddart and O'Keefe, 1992, p. 2). This is important for the mentor because the degree to which they can apply their learning as a mentor in their school is dependent upon the degree to which the organisation supports rather than constrains their developing role (Cunningham, 2007; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). When the architecture of a mentoring culture is scaffolded in a school, mentors can gain "high level" managerial skills (Cunningham, 2007, p. 286). They come to be seen as "star-makers", which assists with the development of their management reputation (Chambers *et al.,* 2015, p. 12).

iv) Secondary Benefits: Institutional (Partnership University): The research base includes the benefits of mentoring for partnership university (Zachery, 2009). Rudduck (1992) adds that both parties can come to appreciate the strengths which each can bring to the partnership (Cited in Whitehead and Fitzgerald, 2006). As a result "traditional mythologies about each other" can be disbanded, with greater understanding unveiled (Rudduck, 1992 cited in Whitehead and Fitzgerald, 2006, p. 46). For the mentor, the development of a progressive triad partnership can result in a sense of validation from their colleagues back at school (McCorkel Clinard and Ariav, 1998).

Despite the evidence above pertaining to the benefits of generative mentoring, it is important to examine to what degree these positive mentoring outcomes have been reported within school university partnerships in Ireland.

#### 2.6.1.4 Ireland's mentoring culture: the rhetoric and the reality

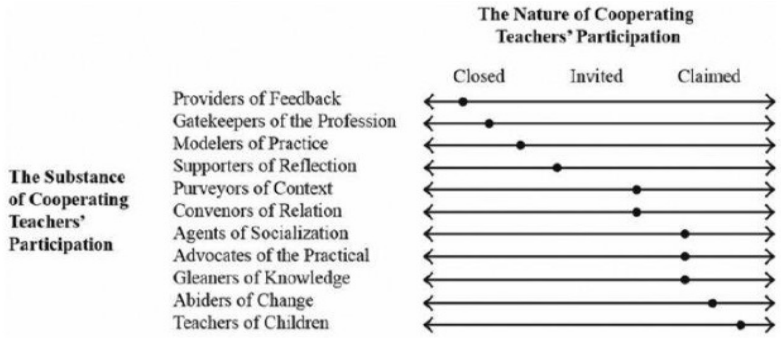
According to scholars, on the surface there appears to be growing support for the mentoring of PSTs on SP in Ireland (Chambers *et al.*, 2012; Hall *et al.,* 2018). However, O'Grady (2017) expressed that "practices on the ground are contrary to those expressed on paper" (p. 52). Ireland's history of engagement in and with the mentoring process has been poor (Chambers *et al.,* 2012). Some claim that a mentoring culture is under-developed in Ireland (Conway *et al.* 2009; Young and MacPhail, 2015; Hall *et al.,* 2018). The OECD (2011) report found that only 35% of teachers reported to have engaging in some mentoring and peer observation and a further 28% reported that they had never been mentored (Cited in Chambers *et al.,* 2012). However, the support

typically offered to PSTs by schools remains unstructured and informal (O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018).

As suggested earlier, partnership universities are still dependent upon a spirit of volunteerism by schools and teachers (Ní Áingléis, 2009; O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Whilst many teachers are cooperative and giving of their time (Coolahan, 2003), the degree and quality of support varies considerably (Conway *et al.,* 2011; Young *et al.,* 2015; O'Grady, 2017). In some cases, teachers "sit at the back of the classroom for a few days to observe" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 40), whilst others see it as "free time" and leave the lesson (Young and MacPhail, 2015, p. 228). Scholars report that PE CTs rarely observe lessons (Young and MacPhail, 2015). Opinions amongst PE CTs vary with respect to whether they *should* be present or provide regular feedback (Belton *et al.,* 2009; Young and MacPhail, 2015). With respect to the guidelines on SP, the Teaching Council Director acknowledged that "some teachers made it clear...that they would never engage in such a process" (Ó'Ruairc, 2015a, p. 8).

Based on Clarke *et al.*'s (2014) review of the literature regarding mentor participation, the typology of the Irish CT relating to 'substance of teacher participation' is towards the 'provider or feedback' end of the spectrum and that the 'nature of participation' is towards the 'closed' end of the spectrum (Cited in O'Grady, 2017, p. 51). See below:

Figure 2-4 Cooperating Teacher Participation Grid




This dominant Irish typology leads to a 'novice-oriented professional culture', in which the PST is mentored a little or not at all, and in which there is little or no opportunity to observe or share practice (Moore-Johnson, 2004 cited in Conway *et al.*, 2013; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Where the culture is more developed, there are more instances of an 'experienced or veteran-oriented professional culture', whereby the PST is supported quite generally but not mentored, observed or provided with feedback (Moore-Johnson, 2004 cited in O'Grady, 2017). It is important to consider which barriers have played a role in such a mentoring culture being underdeveloped.

#### 2.6.1.5 Barriers to the development of a mentoring culture

There are "practical realities, cultural restraints and other challenges" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 157), which prevent mentors from realizing the potential benefits of mentoring (Cunningham, 2007) and stifle the development of sustainable school university partnerships (O'Grady, 2017). This is challenging, as mentoring programmes are only sustainable if the organizational culture values and supports them (Zachery, 2000 cited in Armour, Bleakley, Brennan, Herold and Luttrell, 2011). Unfortunately, in the case of Ireland, there are "conceptual" and "historical obstacles" which lead to stakeholders

perceiving their relationship with PSTs as being more "managerial and instructive rather than educative" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 152). Each barrier presented below is relevant to the mentoring culture in Ireland and to varying degrees, in other countries.

Most studies reporting on the obstacles to effective mentoring cite a lack of time as significant (Young and MacPhail, 2010; Higgins, Heins and McCauley, 2013; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Maintaining day-to-day work on top of the added responsibilities, which come with mentoring can be challenging (Veeramah, 2012). This is often caused by a lack of funding and investment generally (Cross, 1996; Hall *et al.,* 2018). CTs in Ireland are "unpaid volunteers" and as Chambers *et al.* (2012) suggest, this is not conducive to a positive culture of mentoring (p. 359).

The degree to which a mentoring culture can be cultivated is largely reliant upon school principals and management (Lawlor, 2015; Cooper *et al.,* 2016). Indeed, principals play "a key role in developing the kind of school culture which encourages [P]STs, affirms teachers in their roles as professional mentors and welcomes collaborations which strengthens schools as learning communities" (Ní Áingléis, 2009, p. 17). During economic crises, principals are less inclined to prioritise mentoring cultures, as is expressed in the following quote: "[Teachers] have considerable CPD to do for their own careers never mind someone else's" (Janet, Deputy Principal cited in O'Grady, 2017, p. 102).

The degree to which mentors can accrue benefits, is largely dependent upon the nature of the school university partnership and where on the 'school placement continuum' the system resides (Maandag, Deinum and Hofman and Buitink, 2007). The Irish model

has traditionally resided on the least collaborative end of this continuum: the 'work placement' model (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Chambers *et al.,* 2011; Young *et al.,* 2015). This placement model treats the school as a host (O'Grady, 2017); with the CT taking up the role of a 'supervisor of practice', or more often than not, a 'classroom placeholder' or an 'absentee landlord' (Clarke *et al.,* 2014; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Such models and roles encourage limited collaboration with and between the PST, the CT and the UT (Chambers *et al.,* 2011; Kelly and Tannehill, 2012). It prevents the development of reciprocal relationships and co-reflection (Campbell and Campbell, 2000 cited in Chambers *et al.,* 2011). The OECD (2005) found that: "[CTs] and [UTs] often misunderstand each other and fail to work together effectively to assist the [P]ST" (p. 109). As Young and MacPhail (2015) report, this shoves the PE CT out to the periphery of the process. This increases the risk of them feeling marginalised, dismissed and taken for granted (Colvin and Ashman, 2010; Cullimore and Simmons, 2010). Indeed, PE CTs have expressed feeling anxious about UT visits and made themselves "scarce" as a result (Young and MacPhail, 2015, p. 229-230).

In Ireland, there has traditionally been a lack of formal, coordinated mentor education (Belton *et al.,* 2010; Chambers *et al.,* 2012; Young and MacPhail, 2015; Hall *et al.,* 2018). The recent report on SP for the Teaching Council reported that CTs believed that no CPDL existed for CTs (Hall *et al.*, 2018). A principal in O'Grady's study highlighted the inequity of mentor education provision for ITE versus induction mentoring: "I think it is as important as the training of the NQT actually" (Martha, Principal, p. 103). Where mentoring CPD has been provided, it varies too much in duration, quality and sustainability (Russell and Russell, 2011; Ligadu, 2012; Salm and Mulholland, 2015; Hall *et al.,* 2018). The absence of mentor education opportunities

significantly undermines the mentoring process (Mullen, 2010; Kelly and Tannehill, 2012). A lack of CPD makes CTs feel less competent and legitimate in their role (Young and MacPhail, 2010) and less comfortable with PSTs observing them (Sugrue, 2003; O'Grady, 2017). Some have demonstrated an unwillingness to permit it (Williams, Prestage and Bedward, 2001; Conway *et al.,* 2011; O'Grady, 2017). Uneducated CTs are said to struggle with providing critical feedback, reporting feelings of anxiety and guilt (Cullimore and Simmons, 2010; Meegan, Dunning, Belton and Woods, 2013). A fear of evaluation is said to exacerbate teachers unwillingness to provide feedback (Sugrue, 2012; 2013) and to act as a CT (Sugrue, 2012). When the obstacles presented in this section are accompanied by the socio-political, cultural and economic barriers mentioned earlier, it would be understandable to accept that "the conditions of service makes mentoring impossible, even on a goodwill basis" (Clow, 2005, p. 2 cited in Cunningham, 2007, p. 90). There is some careful progress in some quarters with formal CPD programmes being offered for some PE CTs (Chambers *et al.,* 2012). However, CTs continue to struggle to develop their craft in the face of an Irish culture, which constrains their efforts (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011).

Therefore, it is important to heed Armour *et al.*'s (2015) advice that CPDL design needs to consider the teachers and the providers carefully in the design of goals and processes. Meegan *et al.* (2013) found that the opportunity needed to be: "worthwhile for the PE teacher" (p. 201). They state:

> You need to hook them […] and make them see how you can make their lives easier by being involved in this, maybe by a special opportunity that other teachers aren't necessarily getting (p. 210).

As noted previously, the opportunity to learn to be a CT through engaging in a CoP was not yet developed at the inception of this study in Ireland (Belton *et al.,* 2010; Dunning *et al.,* 2011). Therefore, the exploration of the potential of a mentoring CoP [M-CoP] was, and continues to be an important undertaking (Hall *et al.,* 2018).

### 2.6.2 *'Community of Practice': as a CPDL Process*

Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the term: 'community of practice' (CoP). Baker and Beames (2016) maintain that the simplest definition of a CoP to date is still that which was offered by Wenger *et al.* (2002): CoPs "are groups of people who share a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). There is no denying that CoPs are increasingly more prevalent and valued the world over (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). Given the "seemingly breakneck speed" at which the world is changing, CoPs have been promoted as an infrastructure for supporting organisational improvement and reform (Sun-Keung Pang and Wang, 2016, p. 193). "Engagement in a professional community that extends beyond classrooms and school buildings has been identified as a powerful form of teacher learning" (Patton *et al.*, 2015, p. 30). McMillan *et al.* (2012) state that CoPs contain the "optimum conditions for effective CPD" (p. 406 cited in McMillan *et al.,* 2016, p. 159). Similar to mentoring, CoPs have the potential to embed more high quality CPDL characteristic than traditional CPD (Jess and McEvilly, 2015). They are considered to be collaborative, affective, meaningful and relevant (Jess and McEvilly, 2015). Being sustained over time, CoPs allow for knowledge and skills to be transferred, and for such learning to be reflected upon and evaluated (Jess and

McEvilly, 2015).

The language associated with CoPs has become commonly and widely adopted in both personal and professional circles (Wenger, 2010 cited in Pyrko *et al.,* 2017). As such, Armour *et al.* (2015) assert that the CoP concept has "lost much of its original meaning", due to an increase in populist declarations that groups are working as a CoP, when in fact, they are not (p. 4). In order to be considered a legitimate CoP, there are three abiding dimensions: domain, practice and community, which must feature and be developed (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Wenger, 2009).

#### 2.6.2.1 Dimensions, Levels and Stage of Engagement of a CoP

##### *2.6.2.1.1 Three Dimensions of a CoP*

i) Domain: The domain dimension is characterized by a shared enterprise, for example, mentoring, which provides members with a sense of collective identity (Parker *et al.,* 2012; Wenger, 1998) and a sense of belonging (Lindkvist, 2005 cited in Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). As this study focuses upon a mentoring CoP, when discussing these three CoP dimensions, CoP members will be referred to as CTs and CoPs will be referred to as mentoring CoPs [M-CoPs]. This is not to suggest that the literature relates to mentoring-specific CoPs. The term is merely included for the purpose of focus.

Where CTs volunteer to engage in a M-CoP and they care deeply about the domain, engagement in their CPDL with others is considered to be more meaningful (Wenger,

1998). Saldana (2014) believes that the "domain moves people to collaborate and participate, determine what content to share, and build a sense of accountability over time" (p. 23). CTs interact regularly with the aim of being better at what they do (Armour, 2011; Parker *et al.,* 2012) and "deepen[ing] their knowledge and expertise" (Wenger *et al.,* 2002, p. 4). They also become more aware that they are not alone in their interests (Wenger, 2008), which serves to validate their developing expertise (Hogan *et al.,* 2007).

ii) Practice: The passion for a particular domain results in M-CoP CTs developing "*a shared practice*" (Wesely, 2013, p. 307). Wenger (2009) acknowledges that though members may often work alone, they must engage in activities with others, sharing with one another, discussing common issues, supporting one another and ultimately learning from one another. What they bring to the M-CoP and develop together influences their collective practice (McDonald, 2014), including shared "language routines, artefacts, and stories" (Wenger, 1998, p. 72). As M-CoPs promote the application of knowledge, CTs return to their workplace to put their learning into practice (Lum Kai Mun, 2016). As Pyrko *et al.* (2017) state, "knowledge 'sticks to the practice' in the sense that the potential to act is developed in the social context" (p. 392). When they return to the community, they pose and answer one another's practice-based queries (Wesely, 2013). This enhances the capacity of CTs to innovatively and creatively adapt, overcome challenges, refine existing knowledge and co-generate new understanding (Saldana, 2014). In doing so, consensus validates their practice and dissensus leads to the

appropriate questioning of their existing practice (Wenger *et al.*, 2002; Wesely, 2013).

iii) Community: The community contains the people who "care about the domain", in this case: CTs (McDonald, 2014, p. 328). It provides the social structure and space for CTs to interact (Lum Kai Mun, 2016). Pratt (2015) asserts that:

> The community involves the heart as well as the head in a unique blend of intimacy and openness to inquiry. The community is based on mutual respect and a level of trust that provides for social interactions and relationships to develop (p. 29).

There are many ways in which community is built: interacting socially, reciprocating knowledge, negotiating enterprise and shared problem solving (Saldana, 2014). Pyrko *et al.* (2017) add that: "the collaborative learning process of 'thinking together'…is what essentially brings [them] to life and not the other way round" (p. 389). M-CoP CTs must exhibit mutual values and a vision, which "provide[s] a framework for shared collective, ethical decision making" (Louis *et al*., 1995 cited in Stoll *et al*., 2006, p. 226). Working with a highly functioning community can lead to members feeling a

sense of achievement and pride (Williams-Newball, 2014; Cutsforth, Kaschak and Medico Letwinsky, 2015).

Saldana (2014) suggests that "interactions within these three CoP dimensions propitiate fertile ground for group collaboration and innovation" (p. 1).

#### *2.6.2.1.2 Developmental Engagement Levels and Stage of Legitimate CoPs*

A criticism of CoP research relates to the claim that a CoP is deemed to exist, from the moment people come together. Scholars however emphasise that the legitimacy of a M-CoP sits on a continuum, spanning from a gathering of teachers to an 'authentic CoP' (Parker *et al.,* 2012; Pratt, 2015). Wenger (1998) highlights also that CoPs vary in their developmental phases spanning from: 1) potential phase; 2) coalescing phase; and 3) active phase. Whilst teachers may be a member of an active CoP, their levels of engagement (Wenger *et al.,* 2002; Pyrko *et al.,* 2017) and indeed the roles they adopt can vary widely (Borzillo, Aznar and Schmitt, 2011 cited in Baker and Beames, 2016). According to complexity theory, in accounting for the sensitivity of initial conditions where teachers operate at different levels and stages, then a constant state of emergence should be considered acceptable (Haggis, 2008; Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014). Early on in a CoP's development, sharing is said to be random and not cohesive, with members predominantly focused on solutions to their own issues (Deepa, 2006). However, as the CoP develops and the dimensions become more defined, engagement moves from merely a social network to a knowledge network (Deepa, 2006). A commitment to other members' professional development grows over time (Keay, 2005; Scheerens and Sleeger). As CoPs become more knowledgeable and

skilled as a community, it is said that they are more inclined to set collective goals to share their knowledge (Russell *et al.,* 2009; Christens, 2012).

When considering engagement, it is important to acknowledge Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of "legitimate peripheral participation", whereby new members operate on the boundaries of the community until they are confident and competent enough to move "centripetally towards full participation and in so doing both absorbs and is absorbed in the culture of practice" (Cited in Maynard, 2001, p. 41). Additionally, as CoPs are not static systems, they can evolve spontaneously as members leave and new members join and as members' needs and interests change (Roberts, 2006). One factor that influences movement towards full participation relates to the facilitation of interactions and knowledge production in the CoP (Wenger *et al.,* 2002; Pratt, 2015).

#### 2.6.2.2 Facilitating CoP Interactions

Whilst CoPs are a very popular idea, how they operate in organizations has proved challenging to understand (Waring and Currie, 2009; Pyrko *et al.,* 2017). An associated gap in CoP literature relates to "the curiously silent or inconclusive [agreement] on the role of managerial guidance" (Thompson, 2005 cited in Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011, p. 363). Whilst traditionally, CoPs emerged organically via a bottom-up process (Orr, 1996), a CoP should not be fully autonomous but instead, should be guided to a degree, for the sake of the CoP members' engagement and knowledge-sharing levels (Kirkman, Cordery, Mathieu, Rosen and Kukenberger, 2011; Bardon and Borzillo, 2016). The CoP leader's role is to facilitate members to "distribute intelligence…by accelerating social network dynamics" (Borzillo and Kaminska-

Labbe, 2011, p. 356), so that there is less tension and more motivation to share (McKelvey, 2008). If this is achieved, CoPs act as spaces of dynamic democratic participation (Orr, 1996; Bardon and Borzillo, 2016).

#### *2.6.2.2.1 Knowledge Co-production, Expansion and Boundary Spanning*

Pyrko *et al.* (2017) refer to Polanyi's (1966) concept of "shared indwelling" where people with different knowledge bases successfully attend to the same challenges together and in doing so, indirectly share tacit knowledge and redevelop it based on the act of "thinking together" (p. 393). Instead of merely transferring knowledge, members co-produce it (Deepa, 2006; Pyrko *et al.,* 2017). Knowledge expansion is also more likely to occur if knowledge co-production is facilitated (von Krogh *et al.,* 2001; Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). Complexity theorists refer to the potential of CoP members "boundary spanning", whereby members are encouraged to interact with professionals beyond the shape and size of the CoP, thus drawing diversity and freshness back into the system, ultimately supporting further knowledge expansion within the CoP (Lindkvist, 2005 cited in Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011, p. 356). Also, through engaging with professionals beyond the CoP, members have the potential to affect 'second order change' back in their organizations (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010), an important outcome for CTs in Ireland.

### 2.6.2.3 CoPs in Ireland: Engagement and Barriers

Teacher education (King, 2011; Ó'Ruairc, 2013; King, 2016; Hall *et al.,* 2018) and PETE (Chambers *et al.,* 2012) scholars in Ireland promote the development of M-

CoPs. The Teaching Council (2012) asserts that teachers should act as "members of professional learning communities" (p. 4). It is said that the recent increase in Irish PE-CoP development is on account of the decline in the economy (Parker *et al.,* 2012). A number of successful PE-CoPs have been developed in Ireland.[27] However, at the inception of this study, none of these CoPs focused upon mentoring at the ITE PE level. In particular, there are growing calls for the development of CoPs, which include schools, partnership universities and education centres (Teaching Council, 2010b; 2013; Hall *et al.,* 2018).

Despite the potential benefits of CoP engagement, it is acknowledged that real CoPs are "rare if not extinct in today's organizations" (Pyrko *et al.,* 2017, p. 404). Indeed, the TALIS study (OECD, 2009) found that only 51% of teachers surveyed had engaged in and with, not CoPs, but with professional development networks. It was not clear whether such networks functioned as legitimate CoPs or not. The degree to which CoPs can fulfil their potential in the aforementioned cultural climate in Ireland is worthy of further investigation but much evidence points to it being an inhospitable climate. It is important to touch upon the barriers, which prevent CoPs from developing both generally (Pyrko *et al.,* 2017) and in Ireland (King, 2016).

As highlighted throughout, cultures dictate how things are done (Evans 2008). If the underlying values of a culture run contrary to professional collaborative learning philosophies, then teachers' engagement in CoPs becomes much more challenging (Scheerens and Sleeger, 2010; King, 2016). Unfortunately, as with mentoring, the

[27] 'Urban Schools Initiative' (2008) (Tannehill and Murphy 2012); Kerry Education Service (KES) (2007-2009); Physical Education Association of Ireland regional CoPs; and Irish Primary Physical Education Association Teacher Professional Communities.

organisational architecture surrounding CoP development is often too individualistic, hierarchical and vertically structured to scaffold it (Pyrko *et al.,* 2017). As noted previously, knowledge is often perceived to be "a private asset" in Ireland (Baker and Beames, 2016, p. 74). In the drive to hold "a competitive advantage", teachers have been said to knowledge hoard (Baker and Beames, 2016, p. 74). This is unhelpful to CoP development. Moreover, how CoPs are facilitated can serve to buttress tradition and the status quo (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Stoll *et al.,* 2006). Sobottka (2013) suggests that where CoPs are poorly developed, CoP members' sense of pride in their work and achievements are underdeveloped.

Beyond the CoP, modern challenges of a fast paced and demanding society make sustained engagement difficult to achieve (Pyrko *et al.,* 2017). A lack of support and value placed on the CoP by management and staff tend to demotivate CoP members to engage (Hartung and Oliveira, 2013). As teachers in Ireland are not released to engage with CoPs during the school day, only the most committed teachers are willing to engage in their free time (Parker *et al.,* 2012). Parker *et al.* (2012) add that a lack of money acts as a roadblock to CoP engagement. At the time of this study, on account of the fiscal crisis and associated policy agreements, low morale was expressed in the following statement: "'why the hell should I be giving up my own free time to get involved in a community of practice" (Parker *et al.,* 2012, p. 322). Low levels of motivation to engage in and with CoPs have also been partly caused by unions, with teachers being directed to not "'do any more than [they] have to'" (Parker *et al.,* 2012, p. 322). Such barriers stifle a CoP's potential to grow (Baker and Beames, 2016).

There is evidence to suggest that in the context of SP, teacher learning is

enriched through engagement in and with CoPs (Caena, 2014; O'Grady, 2017). Dunning *et al.* (2011) recommended that the next necessary and natural step for PE-CPD in Ireland lay in the development of M-CoPs. It is believed that CTs should be provided with a "space where [they can] debate issues and have their voice and contributions valued" (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011, p. 471). It is said that engagement in CoPs can challenge unhelpful, traditional practices and cultures (Teaching Council, 2010a). For example, the cultural status quo can be challenged by members becoming more open to share with others (Wenger and Snyder, 2000). Additionally, the isolation which PE-CTs experience is alleviated as they have an instant network (Patton *et al.,* 2013). In the Irish context this is important because during challenging times and when energy and motivation is low, CoP relationships help to sustain members engagement and dedication to persevere in the face of resistance (Patton *et al.*, 2005; Fricke, 2013; Tannehill *et al.,* 2013).

There are increasing recommendations that further research be conducted into the learning processes, which develop CoP practices (MacPhail, 2011; Pyrko *et al.,* 2017). Unfortunately, how this topic is reported has been accused of being limited to particulars, which "largely linger in global descriptions" (Pfeiffer and Featherstone, 1997, p. 6 cited in Van Kruiningen, 2013, p. 112). Warren Little (2002) adds that if interaction in CoPs stimulate learning, then there is a need to explicate which events and processes promote it (Cited in Van Kruiningen, 2013). It is proposed that the structure, processes and activities offered by participatory action learning action research [PALAR] ca enhance the potential of a M-CoP.

### 2.6.3 *'Participatory Action Learning Action Research': as a CPDL Process*

#### 2.6.3.1 Teacher Inquiry

For some time, there have been calls for teaching to be "research-informed, research-based or research-driven" (Gleeson, Leitch, Sugrue and O'Flaherty 2012, p. 12). Indeed, in the Cosán framework, the Teaching Council (2016) judges CPD methodology based on "the extent to which it promotes: action research and inquiry" (p. 24). It is said that PE teachers should access existing research to inform their practice but also that they should contribute to the profession's research base (Armour, 2009; Armour *et al.,* 2015).

Collaborative inquiry is placed in the transformative CPD category (Brennan, 2017). Goodyear *et al.* (2013) are amongst scholars who describe practitioner inquiry as "an effective, enjoyable and relevant form of professional learning" (p. 19). This has been reported in both research literature (Day, 1993) and through government expectations and standards (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung, 2007; Goodyear *et al.,* 2013). Cordingley (2015a) is adamant about the valuable contribution which teacher research offers as a CPDL process.

> [She] welcome[d] way[s] of involving teachers in enquiry-oriented and very practical work-based professional learning without requiring them to jump through the requirements of academic credentialisation associated with Master's and Diploma programmes (p. 7).

It is noted that through sharing teachers' accounts of effective teacher inquiry, teachers can begin to see research as being more akin to their practice and are encouraged to see that inquiry based practice is "within their reach" (Cordingley, 2015a, p. 7).

#### 2.6.3.2 Teacher Inquiry in Ireland

Speaking on behalf of the Teaching Council, Ó'Ruairc (2014) stated:

> A systematic culture of research embedded in the profession does not mean that every teacher does a Masters, or PhD – it means a culture where teaching and learning are brought alive, fired by the energy unleashed when great research and great practice support and inform each other (p. 8).

However, he shared that the Teaching Council (2016) recognises that whilst some teachers are engaging in research, "there is plenty of evidence which indicates that for all the research that is done on education, we seem to be punching below our weight as a profession" (p. 5). The teaching profession in Ireland has long been criticized for demonstrating a lack of critical inquiry (Sugrue, 2002; Gleeson, 2012). Whilst the Teaching Council (2011, 2012) compels teachers to use evidence based practice, there is a lack of recognition for teachers engaging in research, collaborative professional inquiry or publishing research papers (Lynch *et al.* 2013). Until the publication of Céim (Teaching Council, 2020), practitioner inquiry was not encouraged or facilitated at the ITE or in-service phases of the continuum (Gleeson and O'Donnachain, 2009; Gleeson,

2010). The OECD (2009) study found that only twenty-six-point-three percent of teachers claimed to have conducted individual and collaborative research in their career. It is also said to be under-engaged in by PE teachers generally (Casey, 2011; Goodyear *et al.,* 2013). Scholars in Ireland have reported that teachers tend to only engage with research literature when they are engaging formally in academic study (Gleeson *et al.,* 2012; Glenn *et al.,* 2012). Gleeson (2012) suggests that practitioners believe that because their practice is so contextually defined, research is not practically helpful to them. Teacher research has also been undermined by a lack of supportive structures (Sugrue, 2009) and resources to facilitate it (Sugrue 2009; Gleeson 2010). Gleeson (2012) points to the fact that expenditure margins for research were reduced in Ireland, even at a time when "the Celtic Tiger was 'alive and well'" (p. 2).

A "prevailing anti-intellectual culture" has been identified as a hindrance to the development of an inquiry mindset in Ireland (Kane 1996 cited in Gleeson, 2012, p. 2). Gleeson (2012) claims that this is not helped by the fact that teachers and teacher educators "inhabit parallel universes in relation to education theory and research" (p. 13). Often, negative attitudes to educational research are attributed to teachers being made to feel like subjects (Vaughn, Klingner, and Hughes 2000 cited in Bruce *et al*., 2011) 'upon' whom or 'for' whom research is conducted (Heron and Reason, 2001; Olesen and Nordentoft, 2013). If teachers are expected to engage more in practitioner research, then research must be done 'with' them (Olesen and Nordentoft, 2013), so that traditional hierarchies can be dismantled, making research more accessible (Anderson, McKenzie, Allan, Hill, McLean, Kayira, Knorr, Stone, Murphy and Butcher, 2015).

Whilst there are many forms of practitioner research, for the purposes of this literature review, one in particular will be focused upon: 'Participatory Action Learning Action Research' [PALAR]. PALAR is increasingly accepted as a pedagogical vehicle for CPDL (Anderson *et al.,* 2015). Whilst literature pertaining to research paradigms is typically presented in the methodology chapter, there are important reasons why it is being introduced here. With respect to the separation of theory and practice, Dick and Greenwood (2015) claim that this dichotomy "obscures as much as it reveals" and "it provides little pressure for theoretical and methodological reflection" (p. 195). The literature review will draw upon the 'participatory action learning' (PAL) element of PALAR. The 'participatory action research' (PAR) element of PALAR will be expanded upon in the methodology chapter.

#### 2.6.3.3 'Participatory Action Learning Action Research' Strategy

PALAR is a lesser known and lesser-used research strategy, which has evolved from a number of other research approaches. A key aim of PALAR is to "conduct educational research that more fully serves the learning and development needs of both community and academy" (Wood and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 2). PALAR researchers tend to demonstrate an interest in the following:

> Processes of facilitating active learning and 'development' to replace one-way teacher-centred instruction and 'training'; and methods and processes of introducing, developing and facilitating experiential learning (Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield, 2016, p. 66).

It particularly focuses upon the needs and desires of community members "whose circumstances have left them poorly provided for, often without adequate services" or "with limited means to organize [and] participate in activities or decision making" (Gilchrist, 2009 cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 20). Mirra, Garcia and Morrell (2016) propose that research engagement can offer teachers an avenue for challenging and acting upon the status quo. As such, given the socio-cultural economic issues identified previously, PALAR could be considered a good fit for the Irish CPD system and an M-CoP.

#### 2.6.3.4 Putting the 'Participatory Action Learning' into CPDL

Kearney, Wood and Zuber-Skerritt (2013) wrote about the effective educational uses of PALAR. They state that it holds the potential to: "(1) promote mutual learning and development; (2) foster the cascading of learning and knowledge to others in the community; and (3) co-create knowledge that is relevant [and] contextualised" (p. 113). PAL takes place as people learn from and with each other (Teare 2009 cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 14). Zuber-Skerritt (2013) list the following PAL activities: 1) reflection; 2) communication and collaboration; 3) self-directed autonomous learning; 4) problem identification, solving and action planning (shared and individual); and 5) presenting and celebrating progress (p. 30). Teare (2013) refers to the cyclical character of the PALAR process:

> The cycle begins when actions (and their results) become experiences and continues as the learner reflects on the experiences (what have they learnt?), then develops, plans and implements new or revised actions

> taking into account the outcomes of learning from 'doing' and 'reflecting' (p. 74).

PAL assists with the application of learning, as it permits the learner to consider their own context and to relate their new learning to their current landscape (Shotter and Gustavsen, 1999; Thorkildsen, 2013). It engages learning in Lather's (1986) "praxis of the immediate", focusing teachers on day-to-day challenges and practices, which directly relate to them (Glassman and Erdem, 2014, p. 212). PAL acts upon the recommendations surrounding CPDL research (Garaycochea, 1990; MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012). It features many CPDL characteristics. Zuber-Skerritt (2013) list the following:

> (1) contextual; (2) developmental and organic or natural (rather than standardized and predetermined); (3) practical and emancipatory (rather than technical); (4) interpersonal, collaborative, inclusive and pluralistic; (5) ethical – and ethically aware; and (6) critically reflexive (p. 12).

Similar to action research, one engages in this cyclical process as individuals (Kearney and Zuber-Skerritt, 2012). However, as explained by Locke *et al.* (2013), participatory research is fundamentally a social activity and is based on social practice. Whether members share an organization or not, they share interests and aspirations (Kearney and Zuber-Skerritt, 2012). There is a significant interest in practical knowledge being co-generated (Fletcher, MacPhee and Dickson, 2015; Smith *et al.,* 2010; Sobottka, 2013). PALAR is said to engage CTs more in higher levels of participation as researchers, learners and facilitators (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, 594-595). Because they have some control over processes, they are more inclined to experience

empowerment (MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012) and emancipation (Waterworth *et al.,* 2016).

PAL is also believed to be "an appropriate and effective approach to community engagement" (Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield, 2016, p. 73). Similar to other participatory strategies, all phases of PALAR are designed to be mutually beneficial for all partners (Wood and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 13). It is suggested that CTs may move beyond private concerns and as they share with one another, discriminating over competing ideas (MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012; Trimble and Lázaro, 2014), there is greater opportunity for knowledge expansion (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). Knowledge exchange from varying contexts can result in raising consciousness (Sobottka, 2013). According to Kearney and Zuber-Skerritt (2012), three "characteristics of a sustainable community" are promoted by PALAR (p. 408). They suggest that communities learn "new ways of doing", for example: "action planning, communicating, collaborating, seeking opportunities [and] finding and implementing solutions" (p. 408). They propose that members discover "new ways of being", for example: being "reflective, persistent, confident, resilient, motivated [and] optimistic" (p. 408). Finally, they maintain that PALAR community members uncover "new ways of knowing", for example for the "self, others… [and] new concepts [lifelong learning, action learning and action leadership]" (p. 408). Unlike much traditional CPDL, PALAR strives to build and support sustainable learning (Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield, 2016), and as such, could be said to complement the development of a M-CoP.

Zuber-Skerritt (2013) suggests that it is necessary to develop a generation of people who are driven to, and capable of cascading their learning to help their teams, organisations and professional communities. This is enabled by the 'action leadership'

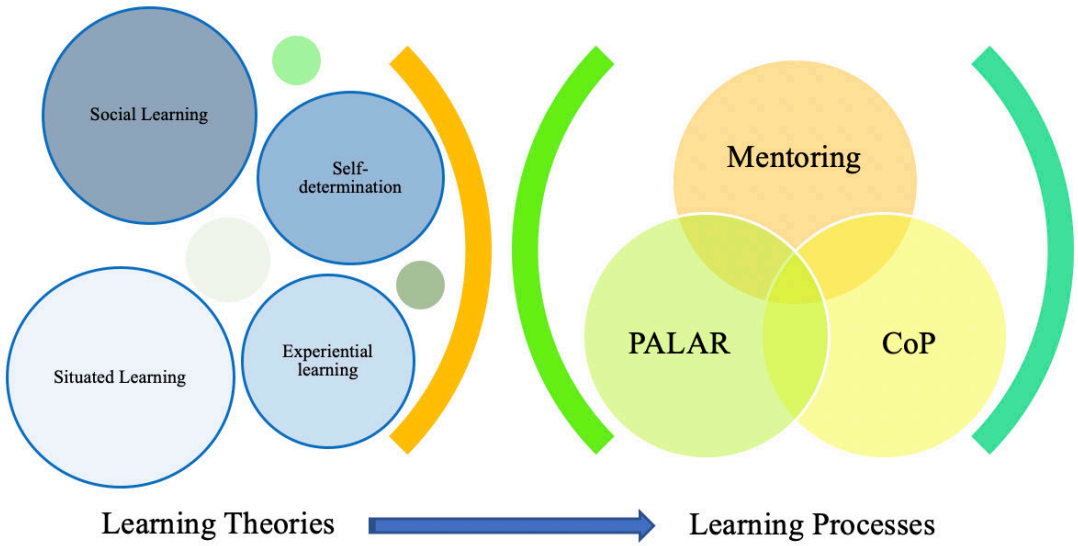
element of PAL, which is "actively creative, innovative" and "collaborative" (Kearney and Zuber-Skerrit, 2012, p. 405-406). Action leaders are passionate and inspirational and through a sense of responsibility and accountability, they enable and empower others (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). As a result, they are less likely to be "victims or passive players within a traditional hierarchy but instead act and interact as equals, expressing ideas and challenging themselves […] for the collective good and for themselves" (Kearney and Zuber-Skerritt, 2012, p. 402).

PALAR as a CPDL vehicle may work well with the development of a M-CoP because "inquiry as stance" involves teachers working within "communities to generate local knowledge, envision and theorise their practices, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, p. 289). Inquiry is important for both mentoring and CoP development. It is particularly beneficial for mentor education in Ireland, as it can help to overcome the prevailing lack of an inquiry approach to mentoring practice, which is said to exist (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). Engagement in PE-CoPs has been limited (Meegan *et al.,* 2013). It is conceivable given the evidence, to accept that a M-CoP could thrive when scaffolded by the processes of PALAR. Raised levels of empowerment (Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015) bolstered by a raised sense of critical consciousness to persist in the face of resistance and to make change happen (Mirra *et al.,* 2016 Glassman and Erdem, 2014, Fricke, 2013) could lead to a M-CoP being a transformative vehicle for CPDL (Kennedy, 2014).

## *2.7 Theoretical Framework*

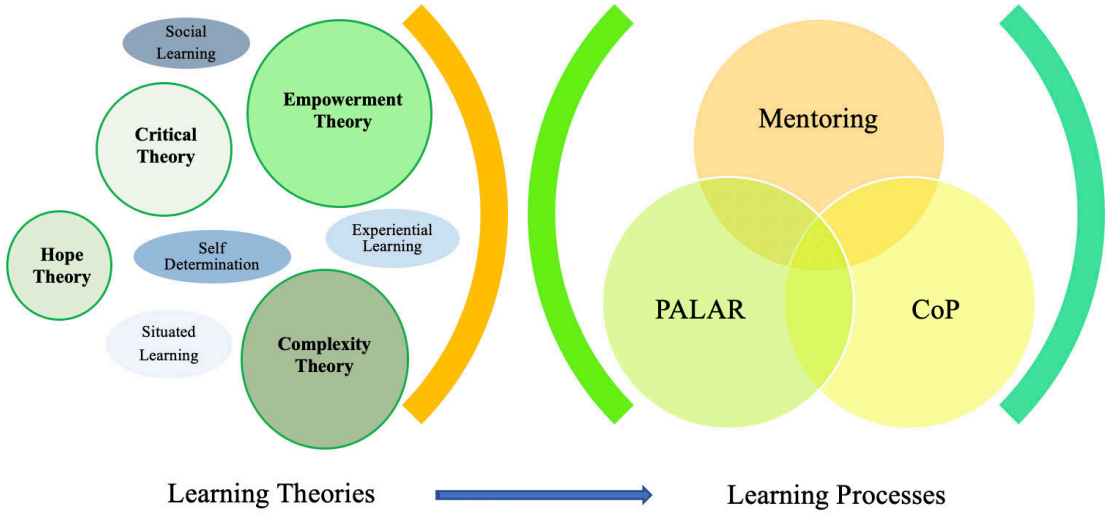
In an attempt to re-envision the design and facilitation of CPDL to support CTs' growth (Parker and Patton, 2017), this study took Shyman's (2011) advice to reorganise design methods so that teacher education could rediscover democracy. The literature review, supported by anecdotal evidence, pointed towards the necessity of developing a meta-design approach (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008) to the theoretical and CPDL model frameworks. Waters and Loton's (2019) assertions about meta-frameworks match those of Boylan *et al.*'s (2018) about CPDL meta-models. Both criticise frameworks and models for adopting unidimensional designs, which include only one or two theories, concepts and / or model features. According to them, this limits possibilities. This research answers an epistemological call from scholars, who promote that CPDL design should be non-foundational (Derrida), bringing together fragments of literature, theories, concepts, and model features, which have "tended to remain separate" (Opfer and Pedder, 2011, p. 377). At the initial model 'design time', a multi-learning processes model was adopted for the "world-as-imagined" (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008, p. 3). Accounting for the afore-discussed 'ideal', 'context', 'reality', and 'changing expectations', the PALAR M-CoP was meta-designed with the following theories in mind: social learning theory; situated learning theory; experiential learning theory and self-determination theory, as illustrated.

Figure 2-5 CPDL Initial Multi-learning Process Meta-Framework




However, as this thesis explores, with needs and situational contexts only partially anticipated, it is necessary to offer an "open" CPDL meta-model and meta-framework design process, which is "under-construction" in 'use time' (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008, p. 3). This "extend[s] the traditional notion of design beyond the original development of a system to include co-adaptive processes" (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008, p. 3). These processes can be used between people (CoP members and between them and other SP partners) and across systems (various CPDL spaces), thus potentially enabling the CTs "to act as designers and [to] be creative" (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008, p. 1). As is explored throughout the findings and discussion; at different points in time, to varying degrees of application, and for a variety reasons, other theories come to the fore, informing the framework and model design. These include: complexity theory, conflict theory, hope theory and empowerment theory.

Figure 2-6 CPDL Evolving Multi-learning Process Meta-Framework




As articulated by Boylan *et al.* (2018): "each one…alone is not adequate…nor provides a complete set of tools to [support] professional learning" (p. 121). Though it is not claimed that this research adopts a strict grounded theory approach, a connection does exist with Mitchell's (2014) suggestion that "coupling…theoretical frameworks…with grounded theory" leaves space for frameworks and indeed models, to evolve realistically (p. 9).

## *2.8 Conclusion*

This chapter aimed to provide a review of the background literature in order to prepare the reader for the remainder of the thesis. There was an intention to rationalise the content to the research problem, questions and purpose. CPDL was defined and provision inadequacies were presented, with associated repercussions considered. On the one hand, evidence of high quality CPDL characteristics were explained and on the other, challenges to CPD participation and provision were outlined. The chapter sought to draw a connection between historical, socio-political and cultural issues and more

recent teacher education struggles. The re-conceptualisation of SP and the implications this has for the CT was addressed, with particular reference to the challenges of the CPD culture previously presented. The historical and recent challenges were also considered in the light of the impact which the fiscal crisis has had upon the teaching profession and its sense of goodwill. Finally, a multi-learning process meta-model was put forth as a potential option for transformative CPDL for CTs. Mentoring, CoPs and PALAR were explained and as a combined model, there was an attempt to highlight how each learning process addressed the research problem. The reader was also presented with trends related to each learning process, including the inadequacies of provision and the challenges to engagement. The study sought to investigate if engagement in the proposed CPDL meta-model could assist CTs to develop as professional mentors within the Irish context. The theoretical meta-framework was outlined and justified.

The next chapter outlines the research design, as well as the methods adopted in conducting this research study. In addition to describing data collection and analysis processes, this chapter will also explore how the proposed model was implemented and in particular, how the participatory action research (PAR) element of PALAR was embedded throughout the study.

# 3 Methodology

They always say time changes things but you actually have to change them yourself - Andy Warhol

## *3.1 Methodology Introduction*

It is considered important to be transparent about one's methodology and the context in which the methodology is employed (Bryman, 2016). I intend to make the reader aware of the methodological steps, so that they can make judgments about whether or not they can transfer meaning to their own settings (Geertz, 1973).

Throughout the study, I reflected via the use of a reflective journal (electronic and written), memos and annotations. Nvivo-10 was utilised to reflect upon and track many of the methods (Waterworth *et al.,* 2016). Such reflexive processes provided me with "an avenue of reflection" and supported the "methodological and interpretive rigor of the study" (Waterworth *et al.,* 2016, p. 58). It is hoped that this constructivist approach helps the reader to understand how my previous ideas and experiences were reconciled with my new thinking and methods (Olusegun, 2015). To honour the advice of Geertz (1973), throughout this chapter, I will include excerpts from my reflections and screenshot examples. As per meta-design theory (Golson and Glover, 2009), this is intended to provide the reader with more insight into the methods, as they were chosen and evolved.

## *3.2 Researcher's Trajectory and Positionality*

### 3.2.1 *Trajectory*

Seamus Heaney's (1969) poem 'Bogland' draws upon the famous bog landscape as a metaphor for the Irish psyche (Meredith, 1999). Both are said to reflect a "dark casket where we have found many of the clues to our past and to our cultural identity" (Broadbridge. 1977, p. 40). Heaney suggests that the complicated, layered makeup[28] of the bog, or psyche, as well as the creative processes[29] which form it, provide a historical map of the unconscious (Foster, 1989 cited in Meredith, 1999). The previous chapter provided some insight into how make-up and processes have affected the Irish education system. Similarly, it is important for the researcher to reflect upon their own socio-historical map and to consider and be open about the positions and professional landscapes, which they have experienced along their journey to this doctoral study.

I was teacher educated in the United Kingdom (UK) where I experienced a number of SP mentors. I taught as a PE teacher for five years in the UK, during which time I acted as a mentor for PSTs on SP. I worked as a teacher researcher and was awarded a National Best Practice Research Scholarship, where I was facilitated to conduct practitioner research. After publishing this work, I was honoured by being accepted onto the 'National Teacher Research Panel'. I also became a local education authority consultant facilitating CPDL for schools and universities. Whilst teaching, I completed a masters degree, conducting research on, including but not limited to: mentoring, SP

[28] Heaney's work on bogs is rife with terms which describe its complicated make-up, such as: "mud, mould, silt, slime, slicks"

[29] He describes the many processes which shape and transform the surface of the earth, such as the weather and time.

and CoPs. I worked as a teacher educator for two years, where I was responsible for facilitating mentoring CPDL and working alongside mentors in the supervision of PSTs. I was a university liaison tutor for a university school partnership CoP, supporting mentors to identify their CoP needs and providing CPDL. I moved to Ireland to a similar role as above. Prior to and during this study, I acted as SP coordinator and inherited the coordination of a programme which was designed to support CTs in their role. The programme was in its infancy and I perceived it to be a somewhat informal and basic programme focused on information sharing rather than CPDL. I was passionate about developing the programme to: 1) align with research recommendations about mentoring CPDL and; 2) supporting CTs to adjust to and meet the Teaching Council (2013) 'Guidelines on School Placement'. With such a vested interest, there are some who would be wary of such an insider position (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). Positionality will now be considered.

### 3.2.2 *Positionality*

It is important to be forthcoming about our positions (Hales, 2015). As Krieger (1991) declares: "the pot carries its maker's thoughts, feelings, and spirit. To overlook this fact is to miss a critical truth, whether in clay, story or science" (p. 89). It is believed that "reporting bias is key as removing bias is not possible" (Hales, 2015, p. 83). As the CoP in this study adopted PALAR as the staple methodological and pedagogical strategy, I held an "insider-outsider status" position (Minichiello *et al.,* 1995, p. 182). As will be described later, my position as, and between: observer and participant; CoP facilitator and member; research facilitator and researcher; academic and practitioner was always in a state of flux. As a result, I simultaneously and dynamically "oscillat[ed]

between the two most extreme points on the...research continuum: insider and outsider" (Leigh, 2014, p. 430).

#### 3.2.2.1 Insider position

A research venture born out of personal experiences can be more fruitful than those derived from more abstract beginnings (Chambers and Armour, 2011; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). By going somewhat 'inside', the researcher can "demystify the social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen *et al.,* 2007, p. 19). As SP coordinator, I was not a "professional stranger" to many of the CTs and this "enable[d] me to generate data that would be rich and original in content" (Leigh, 2014, p. 429). However, qualitative researchers can "impose their personal beliefs and interests on all stages of the research process leading to the researcher's voice dominating that of the participant (Mason, 2002)" (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter, 2016, p. 1802). To prevent familiarity breeding "an almost irresistible flood of personal judgments" (Locke, 1989 cited in Thomas, Nelson, Silverman, 2015, p. 373), I needed to develop a sense of "reflexivity" (Finlay, 2002) and to acknowledge my position (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander, 1995). This involves the researcher in a deliberate self-reflective analysis of their role, which helps to overcome potential biases (Finlay, 2002; Chambers and Armour, 2011). If they can maintain such a balance, the researcher in action becomes a key data collection tool (Merriam, Courtenay and Baumgartner, 2003). Many strategies were employed to protect me, the participants and the data from my potential biases and from the negative impact of reactivity. Instead of listing them here, these strategies will be explained in relation to the particular methods as relevant.

#### 3.2.2.2 Outsider position

Despite the different layers of experience brought to the study, I was fundamentally in a different position to the CTs. I will admit to feeling quite conscious of being viewed as an outsider and of the reactivity impact which this might have upon the CTs' engagement and the data. I was very wary of being seen as a spy, a voyeur, or a pest and I worried that CTs might implicitly or explicitly boycott me and the research (Leigh, 2014). Therefore, as SP coordinator, I did not assign myself to CTs' schools which had not previously worked with me. There was one exception but in this case, the CT had been very familiar with the mentoring practices I was intending to explore, through their teaching career in the UK. I shared my history with the CTs and was careful to make them aware of my insight as a PE teacher and PE mentor, by drawing upon lived experiences.

## *3.3 Research Design*

### 3.3.1 *Definition of research*

Taking a metaphorical stance, Janesick (1994) refers to design as the "'choreography' that establishes the 'research dance'" (Cited in Berg, 2004, p. 19). Before describing the choreography, it is important to highlight which traditions and styles influence the dancer. The reader may recognise parallels between the proposed meta-model of CPDL (Boylan *et al.,* 2018) presented in the literature review and the methodological position, both of which are informed by the meta-theoretical framework (Waters and Loton, 2019). Whilst there may appear to be an air of repetition,

this is deliberate, as I aim to highlight that both the research meta-framework and the CPDL meta-model reinforce many of the same processes.

### 3.3.2 *Theoretical Meta-Framework and Approach*

Regarding the design, Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggest that the researcher should clarify what methodological assumptions they are bringing to the study. As presented in the previous chapters, this teacher education research is informed and guided by theoretical frameworks, which hold a holistic perspective of teacher education, with growth as a central aim (Cochran *et al.,* 2014). Epistemologically speaking, I held a subjective interpretivist approach because it moves beyond measuring how things are, to understanding how those people in the social world interpret their realities (Bryman, 2016; Scott and Usher, 2011). I was more concerned with the views, perceptions and subjective lived experiences of CTs (Morgan, 1997; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Ontologically speaking, I considered myself to be a social constructivist (Hartas, 2010). This nature of inquiry allowed for an appreciation that knowledge and all things social and cultural are derived from interactions between people as opposed phenomena (Bryman, 2016; Hartas, 2010; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). My prospective approach to complexity theory (Morrison, 2008; Cochran-Smith *et al.* 2014), led to a position of 'volunteerism[30]', reflected in my acknowledgement that CTs do not act as puppets responding mechanically to their given environment (Habermas, 1989). Instead, as per self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2006; Benita *et al.,* 2013), they have the potential to be initiators, with a sense

[30] As opposed to determinism, an important position to take considering the criticisms for pre-deterministic approached to CPDL model design (Boylan *et al.,* 2018).

of will and imagination, thus shaping their environments (Morgan, 1997; Cohen *et al.,* 2007).

As I engaged with the study, listened to the needs of the CTs and analysed the data, I became more aware of the need to consider 'complexity theory' in the design (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). Complexity researchers search to understand how complex systems come to be and evolve (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). Whilst complexity theory is said to support an understanding of complex systems, it is charged with being "a-moral and value-free" endeavor, by failing to deal with power inequalities and values (Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014, p. 17). Researchers promote a key theory used in this study: 'critical theory' (Cohen *et al.,* 2007), which is said to address the above limitations of complexity theory (Cochran *et al.*, 2014). Critical theory researchers deliberately challenge the status quo, query social norms, and seek out ways to enhance practice "through action and the involvement of those people who are affected by the situation being investigated" (Taylor and Cranton, 2013, p. 42). The aims of transformation learning theory exist based on the need to help individuals or groups who, in such a social world, have had their voice, participation, interests, inclusion, representation and power undermined by the system in which they operate (Scott and Usher 2011; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). Social constructivist researchers are driven to facilitate the empowerment of CTs; (Zimmerman, 2000; Hartas, 2010), an important focus if CTs were to develop as professional mentors within the complex system of SP, and all its interacting agents and elements (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). I was concerned with not just understanding. I hoped to facilitate change (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). Where the interpretive paradigm researcher asks, 'what is', critical paradigm researchers ask, 'what should or could be' (Merriam and Simpson, 2000), and complexity researchers ask, 'how might agents and

elements interact to achieve it' (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). As Cohen *et al.* (2007) correctly predict, these positions and influences led me to adopt a more subjective, anti-positivist, qualitative approach to the selection of my methodologies.

### 3.3.3 *Research Paradigm: Qualitative Case Study Design*

The qualitative data collection approach is an umbrella term for methodologies that are not dependent on quantification (Strauss and Corbin, 2008) and which attempt to understand through insight as opposed to statistical analysis (Bell, 1999). It deals more with the process than the outcome (Thomas, Nelson and Silverman, 2005), focusing upon "the what, how, when, and where of a thing-its essence and ambience" (Berg, 2004, p. 2-3). Traditionally, qualitative researchers "employ a wide range of interconnected interpreting methodologies in an effort to gain a rich understanding of the subject matter" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 4).

The features, which make this study more qualitative in design, are as follows: I was more concerned with the appropriate selection, use and evolution of theories, than merely the testing of a hypothesis (Bryman, 2016). The process allows for social complexity to be accounted for and for change to occur over time (Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014). It facilitates more flexibility, which nurtures the ability to gain deeper meaning (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). A qualitative design also better allows for rich, deep data to be collected, data which is better able to illustrate the contextual nature of such

research as this (Bryman, 2016).

#### 3.3.3.1 Case Studies

Case studies have been long used in work where particular case-by-case investigations have been required, such as in medicine, psychology, business and law (Berg, 2004). The intention of a case study researcher is "to illuminate the general by looking at the particular" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 53). Case studies are defined by a systematic collection of information about, in this case, a community (Robson, 2002), in order to gain a deeper understanding about how it functions (Berg, 2004). Case studies allow the researcher to provide lived examples of abstract theories in real life authentic settings (Catalano, 2015), helping the reader to understand more easily (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). There is a priority to understand the 'what' and 'how' of things but also to grasp 'why' things are as they are, namely the processes, which led to the state of things (Denscombe, 2010). They are particularly valuable for understanding "relationships, behaviours, attitudes, motivations and stressors in organizational settings" (Berg, 2004, p. 260). Denscombe (2010) attempts to identify the characteristics of a case study by distinguishing contrasts. He suggests that they focus on:

> Depth of study rather than breadth of study; the particular rather than general; relationships/processes rather than outcomes and end products; holistic view rather than isolated factors; natural setting rather than artificial situations; multiple sources rather than one research method;

more qualitative rather than quantitative (usually) (p. 54).

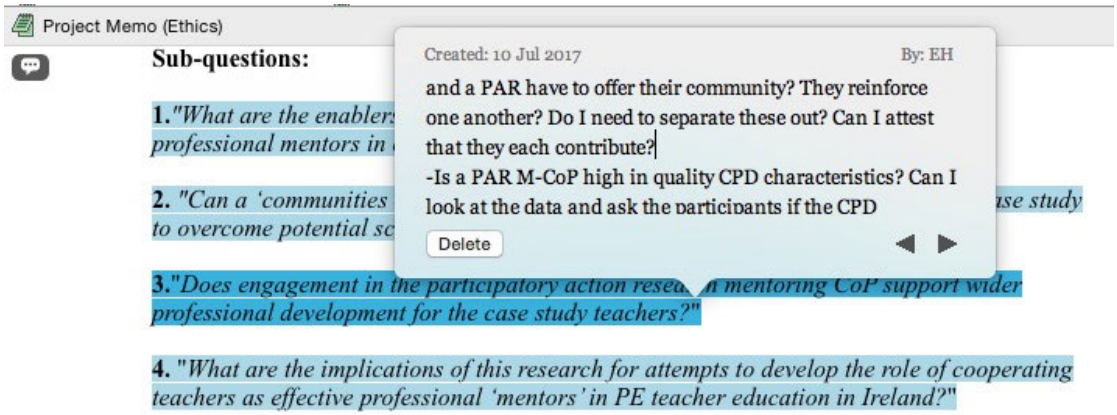
Denscombe (2010) insists that "theory led case study research" uses a case study to elucidate how specific theories play out in reality and then aim to adapt certain factors to investigate the impact such changes might have (p. 55). This type of case study is referred to as 'action research case study' (Sturman, 1994). 'Extended case studies' such as this one, are more likely to move the focus away from basic outcomes like knowledge and skill enhancement, towards better understanding how teachers' experiences and growth are influenced by their interaction with and between complex systems (Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014). They afford the researcher the time to gain insight into how complex systems, agents and elements are affected over time (Rahman *et al.,* 2014; Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014); therefore gaining some grasp of the non-linear causal impact of CPDL (Bryman, 2016; Cohen *et al.,* 2007). This longitudinal approach can lead to powerful insights (Thomas *et al.,* 2005) and transformative outcomes.

### *3.4 Study Aims and Questions*

Prior to engaging with the potential sample, it was an academic requirement to submit a detailed research proposal for ethical approval (Creswell, 2009). As Wood and Zuber-Skerrit (2013) suggest, this "encourages, if not compels, the [researcher] to define the problem and the research design in isolation from the community participants" (p. 11). However, as the PALAR strategy aims to facilitate active participation by CTs, the research questions were used as "*guiding principles rather than strict steps to take*" (Trimble and Lázario, 2014, p. 127). This can be seen in Figure 3-1, which is a screenshot of an NVivo live memo entitled "*project memo: ethics"*. This

contained the successful ethics application. Reflecting cyclically and using annotations, I remained connected to that which was approved. However, this also facilitated me to reflect upon the research questions, thus allowing them to evolve[31].

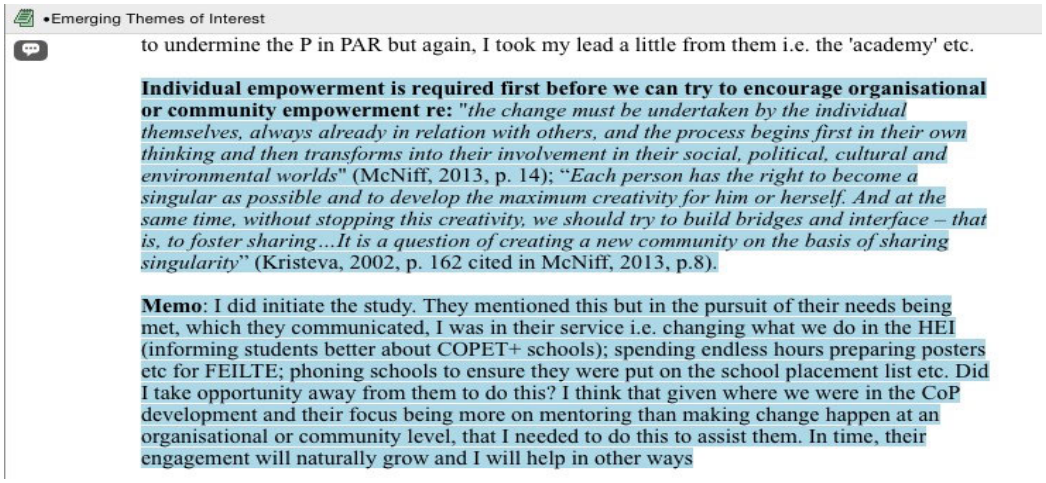
Figure 3-1 Research Question Reflections' Screenshot (NVivo 10)




As Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) recommend, I was adaptable and open to emerging questions and regularly recorded these. Figure 3-2 below illustrates how the interplay between data collection and reading prompted me to consider deeper questions.

[31] It should be highlighted that some of these notes were made in writing and later typed into this open memo.

Figure 3-2 'Emerging Themes of Interest' Screenshot (NVivo 10)




Appendix C provides a map of how the evolved questions developed from the original questions. The enquiry did not change, it merely grew deeper as the research proceeded. Prior to describing the CTs' work together and the data collection process, it is important to describe the sample and how participants were recruited.

## *3.5 Participants and Recruitment*

### 3.5.1 *Recruitment of sample*

Annually, all schools within a 50 kilometer radius of the partnership university were written to, requesting their involvement in SP. Once a complete list was drawn up, I wrote to the PE teacher in each school in order to make initial contact regarding the study. As such, this cohort was a convenience (Berg, 2004) or an 'availability sample' (Babbie, 1998 cited in Berg, 2004). Engaging in and with my various SP roles, with the help of a wider team, I generated a list of CTs in particular who we "felt should be approached regarding participation in the study" (Waterworth *et al.,* 2016, p. 57).

As such, there was also a degree of 'purposive sampling' as I used my "special knowledge" (Berg, 2004, p. 36) about particular CTs who I believed might be: a) ready for such a challenge and b) interested in engaging.

The initial correspondence included an 'Information Meeting Letter' inviting them to attend a meeting which would provide further details about the study (See appendix E). They were also provided with a 'Participant Information Sheet' which provided further details about the study and about CTs' potential involvement (See appendix F). I also enclosed a copy of the consent form (See appendix G). This form outlined statements of consent, which if signed, confirmed that they understood the information on the participant information sheet; had the opportunity to ask questions to receive more clarity; understood that participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw without giving any reason. It was very important that CTs were reassured that consent was voluntary and that there would be no repercussions for not consenting, as per the following statement in the Participant Information Sheet:

> You are under no obligation to become involved. You will still be eligible to be a [CT] for our pre-service teachers and all the previous supports and benefits of doing so will remain. We are always here to assist you in your developing role and welcome your feedback.

As the study was ever evolving, additional ongoing individual implied consent was provided by CTs attending the workshops, verbally at times.

Potential participants attended the aforementioned meeting. At the information

meeting, the ethical promises noted above were reinforced (Denscombe, 2010). Further details were provided such as: what to expect if they consented and the potential benefits. As Ryen (2004) insists: "research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched [and] the right to be informed about the nature of the research" (p. 231). It is believed that consent was well informed (Berg, 2004).

Assurances of anonymity were met (Denscombe, 2010) by replacing real names with pseudonyms in the reporting of data (Findlay, 2006; Wallen and Fraenkel, 2011). This positively affects the validity and reliability of the data (Jones *et al.,* 1997). Whilst there are ethical concerns across all qualitative studies, Smith (2018) asserts that special consideration should be given to group methods. When data are generated as a group, participants naturally have more reason to question anonymity and confidentiality as they are sharing their views with other participants (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). As Berg (2004) suggests, all members signed a 'Group Agreement for Maintaining Confidentiality' form (See appendix H).

### 3.5.2 *Sample*

The sample in this study consisted of twelve CTs, all of whom were practising PE teachers in post primary schools in Ireland. Five were qualified PE teachers only (teacher educated abroad in the UK) and seven were qualified to teach PE and a second subject. The average age of CTs was thirty-seven ranging from thirty-one to fifty-two. The gender split was seven : five (Female [fifty-eight percent] : Male [forty-two percent]). Their average experience as qualified PE teachers was ten years and ranged from three to thirty years. This range predominantly adhered to the Ballinger and

Bishop's (2011) recommendation that mentors should be experienced PE teachers with a minimum of three years experience. All schools had previously accommodated a PST from the university partnership. Whilst some had mentored PST from different universities, only seven (fifty-eight percent) had personally mentored a PST from the partnership university previously. In such cases, their departmental colleague mentored the PST.

### *3.6 Putting the 'Participatory Action Research' into PALAR*

This study can be described as "[meta-]design-based research" because it explored "situated learning or learning in context through systematic design" (Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010, p. 311). Design-based studies seek to generate and expand knowledge about "developing, enacting, and sustaining innovative learning environments" (Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010, p. 311). Such an approach allows the researcher to simultaneously act as a researcher and educator, whilst learning processes are being investigated (Kelly, 2003 cited in Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010). In so doing, such research is considered to be both educational and scientific (Kelly, 2003 cited in Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010).

Based on this motivation, PALAR was selected as a research strategy. According to Kearney *et al.* (2013), PALAR integrates 'action learning' and 'action research' "*in a holistic way*" (p. 114). Whilst the literature review offered some insight into the participatory 'action learning' (PAL) element of PALAR, this chapter will provide more insight into the participatory 'action research' (PAR) element of the strategy. It should be acknowledged however that both concepts are not mutually exclusive but are

tightly interconnected.

Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield (2016) believe that participatory research came about due to the dissatisfaction which social science researchers felt regarding traditional research paradigms. The 'researcher' and the 'researched' power imbalance which has been reported (Bruce *et al*., 2011) parallels the aforementioned power imbalance in CPDL provision in Ireland. A PALAR philosophy expects the researcher to conduct research not 'on' people but 'with' people and to treat them not as 'informants' or 'subjects' but instead as CTs or co-researchers (Wood and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). Aligning well to self-determination theory principles (Deci and Ryan, 1987; Benita *et al.,* 2013), it is suggested that more "democratic research practice[s]" could help teachers in Ireland to overcome negative attitudes surrounding educational research (Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield, 2016, p. 68).

Most forms of action research broadly aim to achieve two outcomes. Firstly, as per critical theory (Freire, 1972), participants explicitly take action to improve situations (Dick, 2004 cited in Wood and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). Secondly, there is a focus on researching the change process, which simultaneously improves understanding and helps the researcher to articulate if and how change takes place (Wood and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). The strategy needed to fit well with the planned development of an M-CoP in the Irish context. Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield (2016) add that PALAR can assist "communities [to] achieve positive change together" (p. 73). Given the literature surrounding the culture of CPDL and mentoring in Ireland, there was an aim to tackle change in a meaningful and sustainable way. Finding pathways to "107ascade[e] learning and benefits to others" is one way of supporting change, and is characteristic

of PALAR (Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield, 2016, p. 73).

When deciding on a research approach, it is important to consider the principles and values, which are promoted and upheld by it. Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield (2016) list the following key principles and values of PALAR:

> participation, collaboration, communication, inclusiveness, critical reflection, mutual respect, honesty (to oneself and others), equality, democracy, mutually supportive dialogue, dialectical discussion, openness to criticism and self-criticism, and appreciation of diverse perspectives (p. 69).

As this chapter proceeds, I aim to clarify how the research strategy processes and activities honoured these guiding principles and values. Chevalier and Buckles (2013) list the following PALAR processes: 1) defining project goals and mission; 2) setting priorities; 3) developing a resources management proposal; 4) monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous); 5) exploring problems; 6) solving a problem; 7) managing a conflict; 8) managing change; 9) evaluating a project. A further two processes are added, as promoted by Zuber-Skerrit (2002): 10) preparation for presentations and; 11) presentation and celebration. Throughout the study, the following activities were engaged in: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Lewin, 1948). Though the "spiral of self-reflective cycles" was originally a key feature of action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 563), it has been carried forward in most action learning research models. Whilst CTs were made aware that "individual objectives…[would]...be central" they also agreed to set "shared objectives for the

community, which [would be] negotiate[d]" (Participant Information Sheet). The quote below highlights why the PALAR strategy was used to drive the M-CoP:

> People involved in PALAR projects are interested in participating (P) and working together on a complex issue (or issues) affecting their lives, learning from their experience and from one another (AL) and engaging in a systematic inquiry (AR) into how to address and resolve this issue/issues (Kearney *et al.*, 2013, p. 114).

In order to understand the data collection methods and the data generated, it is necessary to outline the participatory actions, which the CTs performed together in the PALAR M-CoP. As Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout (2010) assert, if I am claiming to have used PALAR methods, then it is important to outline the ways in which CTs engaged in the research processes.

### 3.6.1 *PALAR M-CoP Programme*

The PALAR strategy contributes to the community dimension, by providing space where CTs can come together to build a relationship and negotiate a shared journey (Woods and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). CTs were invited to come together for four two hour workshops at the partnership university to develop their domain knowledge and skills as SP mentors. The four workshops took place after school, in the partnership university and spanned 13 months from March 2014 to April 2015. Full attendance is not always a feasible expectation (Morgan, 1997). On one occasion, where a CT was unable to travel, she attended through video conferencing (using the FaceTime

application) (Berg, 2004). Attendance per workshop is illustrated below in table 8.

Table 8 PALAR M-CoP Workshop Attendance

| **M-CoP Work shop** | **When** | **No. of Participants** | Aoife | Ellen | Ria | Niamh | Eamonn | Aidan | Padraig | Abigail | Oisin | Sean | Mary | Caroline |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | March, 2014 | 9 CTs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **2** | May, 2014 | 8 CTs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **3** | October, 2014 | 10 CTs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **4** | April, 2015 | 5 CTs | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Step one of any action research cycle is to gather an understanding of the current situation (Habermas, 1971; Cohen *et al.,* 2007). As per self-determination theory (Benita *et al.,* 2013), this involved us determining what mentor CPDL needs the M-CoP wished to focus upon. An indicative curriculum was provided with CTs providing more input as the study progressed. After workshop 1, CTs were facilitated to select which two topics they wished to focus on in the next workshop. Doodle software was

used to manage this. In so doing, CTs were 'setting priorities' regarding their development (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013).

### 3.6.2 *PALAR M-CoP Workshop Methodologies*

#### 3.6.2.1 Workshops

To ensure that workshop activities were equally focused on PAR (research) aims, and not just PAL (CPDL), all activities were mapped against the PALAR processes, principles and values shared previously (See appendix I for workshop outline). For example, in the opening workshop, CTs were directed to define their individual goals for the study (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). As is mapped, illustrated and explained below in Figure 3-3, CTs completed the activity: 'time capsule' (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013).

Figure 3-3 'Time Capsule' Artefact

| **Indicative Content** | **PALAR Process** | **PALAR Activity Explanation** | **PALAR Artefact Example** |
|---|---|---|---|
| What is your dream for your engagement in the study. | Defining project goals and mission | • '*Time Capsule'*: place your dreams and fears (on the front and back of the post-it respectively) inside your time capsule. Can share if you wish. Will review at the next workshop and perhaps share next time |  |

By consenting, CTs agreed to reflect upon "where [they were] in [their] development and how [they] got [t]here" (Participant Information Sheet). As McNiff (2013) states,

the ‘action’ part of action research involves thinking explicitly about the circumstances one finds oneself in, and considering how one has gotten there and why. Smyth (1989) considers this stage to be one of ‘description’: “what am I doing?” and one of ‘information’: “what does it mean?” (Cited in Cohen *et al.,* 2007, p. 29). It requires participants to review their existing practices (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002; Cohen *et al.,* 2007). CTs were facilitated to evaluate what mentoring roles they had developed to date through: “free listing” and “ranking” (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) and generating an “Identity Wall*”* as illustrated in Figure 3-4 below. They were asked to reflect upon the mentoring roles which they felt they adopted most, when and why. They indicated this by writing the role on an ‘identity jigsaw piece’. They pieced these together so that they could see their developing collective identity as an M-CoP. Where the same role was developed by multiple members, these pieces were stuck on top of one another creating a multiple dimension illustration of which roles were being adopted most by the community.

Figure 3-4 ‘Identity Wall’ Artefact

| Indicative Content | PALAR Process | PALAR Activity Explanation | PAR Artefact Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| What the role of a mentoring CT is i.e. roles, responsibilities | Setting Priorities | • ‘*Ranking’*: In 3’s order the roles: top (most important) to bottom (least important). Each group are then allocated one role from the top 3.<br>• ‘*Free Listing*’: on the back of the role, write down responsibilities associated with that role. 1 person is nominated to share with the M-CoP. Any thoughts? Would you add any roles?; which were not there?<br>• ‘*Identity Wall*’: decide on the role you currently do best and write it on the jigsaw piece |  |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | |  |

As per complexity theory, as part of the diagnostic phase of any action research, participants should be facilitated to "criticize, problematize, and claim their condition" (Glassman and Erdem, 2014, p. 213). As Glassman and Erdem (2014) claim, doing so may "eventually enable them to overcome" their barriers (p. 213). Based on Zuber-Skerritt's (2002) work, Kearney *et al.* (2013) describe the initial problem identification and needs analysis phase. Through this phase, I sought to support the CTs to "brainstorm to clearly identify the main problems or issues that need[ed] to be addressed urgently" (p. 116). CTs were facilitated to explore problems (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) both individually and as a group, through discussion (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 46). In workshop 1, CTs were asked to identify barriers to their CPDL engagement in and with mentoring, as well as their CPDL implementation. They wrote their perceived barrier as graffiti on a 'Lego' brick and together constructed a community 'Barrier Wall'. See Figure 3-5 below:

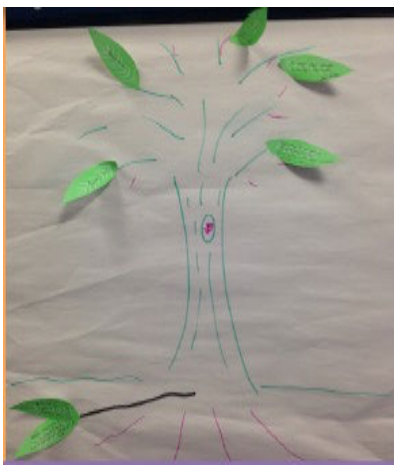
Figure 3-5 'Barrier Wall' Artefact

| **Indicative Content** | **PALAR Process** | **PALAR Activity Explanation** |
|---|---|---|
| What challenges or barriers prevent us from mentoring as we would wish to (to date). What can we do to overcome those within our control? | Problem identification, problem exploration | '*Gaps and conflicts*': to identify the issues underlying the core problem and find out if these issues are mostly about 1) gaps or 2) conflicts of power, 2a) interests (gains or losses), 2b) moral values, or 2c) information and communication. Using 'free listing', write a core problem and main cause on a card. For each cause, write down on the card if it is a matter of 1 or 2a/b/c. Then create a gaps and conflicts table placing cards in the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | appropriate column or in the middle if addresses both 1 and 2. Write each barrier on a lego brick building wall |
|  | | |

By consenting, CTs agreed to support one another in "deciding on an appropriate action to reach [their] potential" (Participant Information Sheet). "In the inquiry stage, researchers and CTs identify [...] methods to collectively address...problem[s]" (MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012, p. 12). Engaging in activities such as the one below, CTs were encouraged to work collaboratively and interdependently to "solve new, complex problems" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 10).

Figure 3-6 ' Problem Tree and Resource Mapping Artefact

| **Indicative Content** | **PALAR Process** | **PALAR Activity Explanation** | **PALAR Artefact Example** |
|---|---|---|---|
| How do our experiences influence how we mentor and challenge our assumptions ? | Exploring Problems and solving problems | • '*Problem tree (cause and effect)*': Draw roots to represent how you were mentored and if positive draw a branch. From the nurtured branch, add leaves for every positive attitude or behaviour it instilled in you. If it was a negative, draw a shorter branch and use words to express the negative attitudes or behaviours it left you with<br>• '*Resource Mapping*': Identify the gaps of conflicts, which are in your control to some degree and identify what action is needed. |  |

In line with critical theory (Habermas, 1978) and empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 2000), Smyth (1989) considers this stage to be one of 'reconstruction' and prompts the participant to consider: "how might I do things differently?" (Cited in Cohen *et al.,*

2007, p. 29). As agreed, they were facilitated to "identify...where [they] wish[ed] to take [their] development" (Participant Information Sheet). As Waterworth *et al.* (2016) indicate, participatory approaches aimed to help CTs "to address aspects that [were] important to them" (p. 63). Engagement in solution identification processes led to "target-setting" (Participant information sheet). As illustrated below, CTs were prompted to set targets in their 'Learning Journey Plan' for: solving problems, managing conflict and managing change (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). CTs could share this privately or via a shared platform.

Figure 3-7 Gaps and Conflicts – Target Setting

<table>
<tr><th>Indicative Content</th><th>PALAR Process</th><th>PALAR Activity Explanation</th></tr>
<tr><td>Overcoming barriers being posed to their engagement in and with the M-CoP</td><td>Solving a problem; Managing conflict; Managing change</td><td>• Based on gaps and conflicts game, pick one barrier as a group and come up with potential solutions. Pick an individual one and have it as one of your targets in your 'Learning Journey Plan'</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">
Your Learning Journey Plan
<table>
<tr><th>Target (What you wish to develop)</th><th>Developmental Activity (See the reflective packs as activities are there. Request a pack from the doodle poll if you don't wish to develop what we focused on in workshop 1)</th><th>When by? (i.e. date or week etc)</th><th>Achieved ★</th></tr>
<tr><td>Give meaningful support and feedback to my student. My role is dual - as both co-operating teacher (and as such I have a duty-of-care to my own pupils) and role model for my PE student. As role model I want to model to him what</td><td>Welcome student to my school and let him get a 'feel' for the school culture and ethos.<br>Discuss what our respective expectations are from the placement and clarify issues - such as documentation needed.<br>Open up the learning conversation from the very beginning - initiate the reflective dialogue and invite his response (hopefully develop his trust that this is a two-way</td><td>within first week<br>within first week<br>ongoing and developing over the entire placement</td><td>done<br>done - i could have been more organised<br>ongoing</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

Extending the principles of complexity theory beyond the research, CTs were advised that "realism has to be central to this study" (Participant Information Sheet). I encouraged: "If you have a lot of other commitments (home, school, professional), then only set manageable targets" (Participant Information Sheet). This was important for

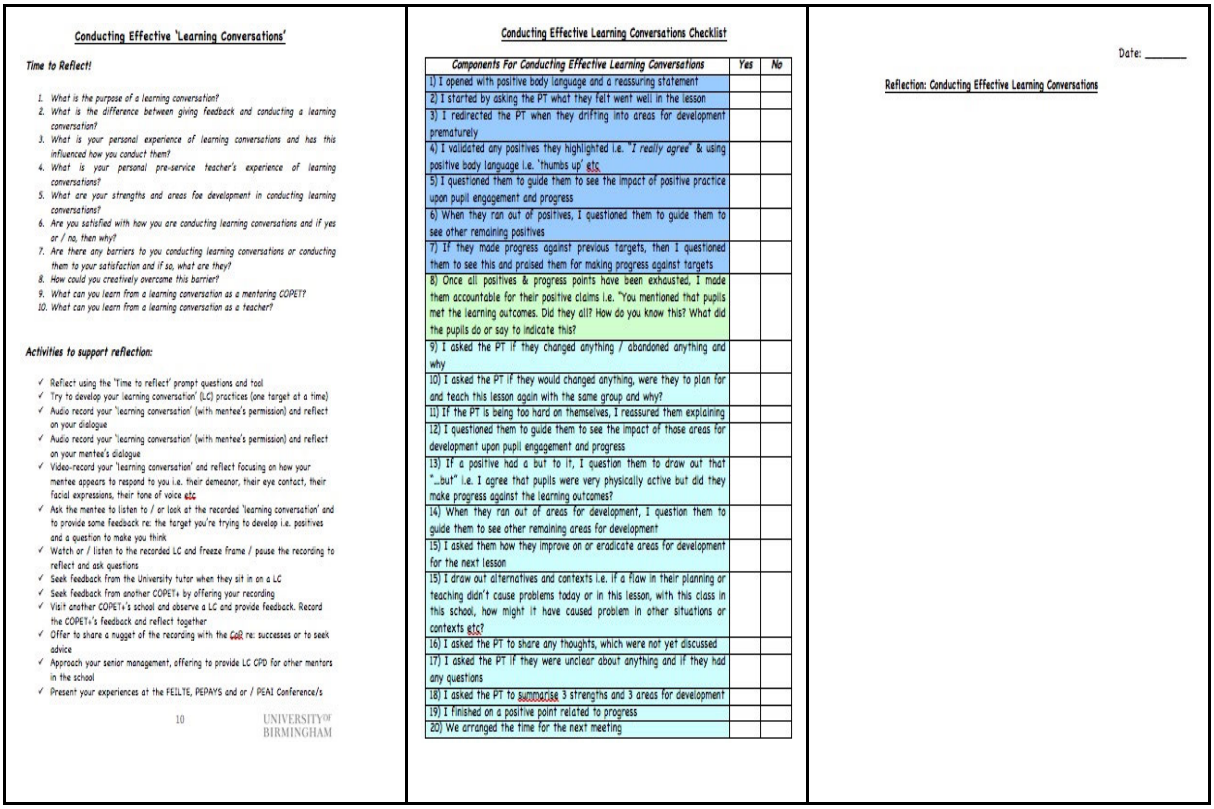
sample retention (Fletcher *et al.,* 2015).

#### 3.6.2.2 Between Workshops

As per Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, "learning from action means we learn by doing" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 14) through "action or concrete experience, as well as taking action as a result of this learning" (Kearney *et al.,* 2013, p. 113). In returning to their schools, CTs were afforded the situated opportunity to "try it out" (McNiff *et al.,* 2002, p. 71). As Argyris and Schön (1974) suggest, there was a hope that CTs would cause "ripples of change to fan out over [their] whole system" (cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 21).

To support CTs' action targets and reflection, CTs were provided with a choice of 'Learning Journey Reflection Packs' (Hard copy folder and electronic shared folder). Whilst the workshop foci were agreed based on consensus, the availability of these packs supported CTs' autonomy and agency, as they could engage individually with other elements of the mentoring curriculum, such as: 'Supporting Student Teacher Identity Construction', for example. Informed by the work of Schön, (1987), each pack included: i) 'Time to reflect', which included questions to prompt reflection; ii) a tool or checklist, which facilitated them to evaluate their practice and development related to the pack focus and; iii) a space for reflecting on that focus. See figure 3-8 below.

Figure 3-8 Sample Learning Journey Pack



**Conducting Effective 'Learning Conversations'**

*Time to Reflect!*

1. What is the purpose of a learning conversation?
2. What is the difference between giving feedback and conducting a learning conversation?
3. What is your personal experience of learning conversations and has this influenced how you conduct them?
4. What is your personal pre-service teacher's experience of learning conversations?
5. What are your strengths and areas foe development in conducting learning conversations?
6. Are you satisfied with how you are conducting learning conversations and if yes or / no, then why?
7. Are there any barriers to you conducting learning conversations or conducting them to your satisfaction and if so, what are they?
8. How could you creatively overcome this barrier?
9. What can you learn from a learning conversation as a mentoring COPET?
10. What can you learn from a learning conversation as a teacher?

*Activities to support reflection:*

- ✓ Reflect using the 'Time to reflect' prompt questions and tool
- ✓ Try to develop your learning conversation' (LC) practices (one target at a time)
- ✓ Audio record your 'learning conversation' (with mentee's permission) and reflect on your dialogue
- ✓ Audio record your 'learning conversation' (with mentee's permission) and reflect on your mentee's dialogue
- ✓ Video-record your 'learning conversation' and reflect focusing on how your mentee appears to respond to you i.e. their demeanor, their eye contact, their facial expressions, their tone of voice etc
- ✓ Ask the mentee to listen to / or look at the recorded 'learning conversation' and to provide some feedback re: the target you're trying to develop i.e. positives and a question to make you think
- ✓ Watch or / listen to the recorded LC and freeze frame / pause the recording to reflect and ask questions
- ✓ Seek feedback from the University tutor when they sit in on a LC
- ✓ Seek feedback from another COPETs by offering your recording
- ✓ Visit another COPETs's school and observe a LC and provide feedback. Record the COPETs's feedback and reflect together
- ✓ Offer to share a nugget of the recording with the CoP re: successes or to seek advice
- ✓ Approach your senior management, offering to provide LC CPD for other mentors in the school
- ✓ Present your experiences at the FEILTE, PEPAYS and or / PEAI Conference/s

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**Conducting Effective Learning Conversations Checklist**

| *Components For Conducting Effective Learning Conversations* | *Yes* | *No* |
|---|---|---|
| 1) I opened with positive body language and a reassuring statement | | |
| 2) I started by asking the PT what they felt went well in the lesson | | |
| 3) I redirected the PT when they drifting into areas for development prematurely | | |
| 4) I validated any positives they highlighted i.e. *"I really agree"* & using positive body language i.e. 'thumbs up' etc | | |
| 5) I questioned them to guide them to see the impact of positive practice upon pupil engagement and progress | | |
| 6) When they ran out of positives, I questioned them to guide them to see other remaining positives | | |
| 7) If they made progress against previous targets, then I questioned them to see this and praised them for making progress against targets | | |
| 8) Once all positives & progress points have been exhausted, I made them accountable for their positive claims i.e. "You mentioned that pupils met the learning outcomes. Did they all? How do you know this? What did the pupils do or say to indicate this? | | |
| 9) I asked the PT if they changed anything / abandoned anything and why | | |
| 10) I asked the PT if they would changed anything, were they to plan for and teach this lesson again with the same group and why? | | |
| 11) If the PT is being too hard on themselves, I reassured them explaining | | |
| 12) I questioned them to guide them to see the impact of those areas for development upon pupil engagement and progress | | |
| 13) If a positive had a but to it, I question them to draw out that "...but" i.e. I agree that pupils were very physically active but did they make progress against the learning outcomes? | | |
| 14) When they ran out of areas for development, I question them to guide them to see other remaining areas for development | | |
| 15) I asked them how they improve on or eradicate areas for development for the next lesson | | |
| 15) I draw out alternatives and contexts i.e. if a flaw in their planning or teaching didn't cause problems today or in this lesson, with this class in this school, how might it have caused problem in other situations or contexts etc? | | |
| 16) I asked the PT to share any thoughts, which were not yet discussed | | |
| 17) I asked the PT if they were unclear about anything and if they had any questions | | |
| 18) I asked the PT to summarise 3 strengths and 3 areas for development | | |
| 19) I finished on a positive point related to progress | | |
| 20) We arranged the time for the next meeting | | |

Date: _____

**Reflection: Conducting Effective Learning Conversations**

With respect to setting action targets, CTs consented to consider "if it worked" and were prompted to "articulate why" change may have, or may not have occurred, in their 'reflective learning journal' (Participant Information Sheet). Reflecting "on what went well and what did not, how and why" is a central PALAR activity (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 14). PALAR promotes that CTs reflect and act "upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire 1972, p. 28).

### 3.6.2.3 Returning to PALAR M-CoP workshops

Implementing targets involves CTs in 'project work' (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). It was important that CTs be given the opportunity to return to the M-CoP "to monitor their progress […] and identify how groups may best support each other in their projects towards the shared goals of the program" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 46). CTs were

prompted to cyclically evaluate the improvements in their situation (Habermas, 1972; Cohen *et al.,* 2007). By re-opening their 'time-capsule', CTs had the opportunity to re-evaluate whether their hopes were evolving and if they needed to be adjusted. As Zuber-Skerrit (2013) state, visions should be revisited as they change in the light of experience and discussion. In the same way, CTs revisited their evolving mentor identity construction through the '*identity wall*' activity.

CTs also reviewed their 'barrier wall' activity and reflected on whether or not they had overcome these fears and barriers in any way. If they had, they were prompted to explain how (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) and were directed to turn the brick back to front exposing a new clean brick. This process offered the CTs the continuous opportunity to 'monitor and evaluate' the study (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). Where CTs achieved 'success' or overcame a barrier, which they deemed to be a 'triumph', this was 'presented' and 'celebrated' amongst the community (Zuber-Skerrit, 2002). On star shaped post-its of varying sizes, the CTs illustrated their triumph, which we referred to as a 'pearl of wisdom'. The size of the post-it selected was dependent on their personal sense of mastery. They then chose a 'marble of success' from a selection of marble sizes and placed these into the community's 'success bag'. CTs were then given the chance to discuss their pearls of wisdom; how they came to realise them, and how actions achieved the desired effect. The 'wall of success' containing the 'pearls of wisdom' were on view at each workshop and were shared electronically in a shared folder.

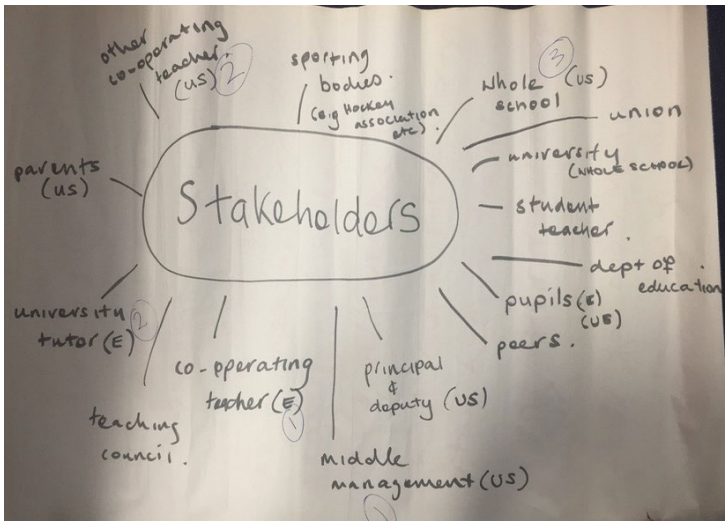
Figure 3-9 ‘Pearls of Wisdom’ and ‘Marbles of Success’ Artefacts

| Indicative Content | PALAR Process | PALAR Activity Explanation | PALAR Artefact Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| What progress have you made against your targets? | Monitoring and evaluating; | “*Pearls of Wisdom*”: Recording success and triumphs on star post-it (of varying sizes to represent how great a success it was). Share with and explain to members. |  |
| What triumphs have there been over adversity? | Presenting and celebrating | “*Marbles of Success*”: based on the perceived degree of success, select a marble from a variety of sizes (as above) and place it in the success bag (to show the M-CoP’s growing collective success). |  |

As they updated one another on progress or lack thereof (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013), they shared strategies for change (Woods and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). Through explaining their triumphs, it was hoped that CTs would also develop an array of “ways of addressing recurring problems” (Wenger, 2009). As such, CTs could be armed with greater problem solving capacity (Trimble and Lázaro, 2014; Wenger, 2009). This could then potentially help them to overcome resistance (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011).

CTs engaged in ‘constraint analysis’ and together, they identified who they perceived to be helpful and unhelpful stakeholders. They were cyclically prompted to discuss how to overcome their barriers to CPDL engagement and implementation with stakeholders in mind (Kearney *et al.,* 2013; Zuber-Skerrit, 2013). See Figure 3-10 below:

Figure 3-10 Stakeholder Identification




I intended for CTs "to take charge of their own lives and work, discussing and reflecting with others on […] what needs to be done next, how and to what end" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 21). Such triple-loop approaches have the potential to liberate participants by abandoning the "given, determined or predetermined" for the "emergent (Taylor, 2011), transformational and sustainable" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 22). Given the culture described earlier, this was an important process.

As proposed by McNiff (2002) and as directed in the Participant Information Sheet, CTs would be "adjusting the plan of action slightly based on [their] deepened knowledge base and widened perspectives". It is proposed that raised consciousness, "conscientization" has a knock-on effect on action and each new action offers a new spring-board for further research and reflection (Glassman and Erdem, 2014, p. 214). CTs returned to their schools with new action targets, with the intention to "improve their real-life situations" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 21). The cycle continued.

#### 3.6.2.4 Celebrating and Disseminating

Whilst I presented work through conference presentations and journal articles, I also wanted to recognise and celebrate the CTs and their work (Wood and Zuber-Skerrit, 2013). As part of community development, Wood and Zuber-Skerrit (2013) assert that it is important to offer a "space [...] for participants to present their work to a wider audience" (p. 8) in order to "showcase *their* knowledge and practical contributions" (Wood and Zuber-Skerrit, 2013, p. 9). Five CTs exhibited some of the M-CoPs work together at the Teaching Council 'Festival for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Education' (FEILTE). We presented three showcases and two workshops[32]. A number of CTs met with me in smaller groups to discuss, plan and prepare the presentations. One pair also met separately to continue their work on this. CTs worked together in smaller groups electronically to prepare, for example: through text messages, email and through shared folders and documents on the M-CoP google drive.

As the methodology proceeds, PALAR processes will continue to be outlined, particularly with respect to CTs' involvement in '*evaluating a project*' (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) and participating as a co-researcher (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010). How data were generated through all of the above processes and through other data collection methods are explained in the next section.

[32] 'Mentoring CoP: What's in it for the Mentors' workshop and showcase; 'Becoming Reflection Practitioners - Conducting Effective Learning Conversations' workshop and showcase; and 'AfL: What About The Teachers?' showcase. The latter particularly drew upon how PALAR processes provided the assessment for learning opportunities which traditional CPDL typically lacks.

## *3.7 Data Collection*

### 3.7.1 *Multiple Methods and Triangulation*

I adopted a multiple methods approach to data collection. When attempting to analyse data, triangulation helped to reassure me that the data was not "simply [a matter of] artifacts of one specific method of collection" (Cohen and Manion, 1986, p. 78). Where one method had limitations, another method helped to overcome what the first one lacked (Denscombe, 2010). I worked to Denzin's (2001) triangulation categories: a) data source; b) method; c) and researcher.

Data were collected from numerous sources. This included me, as a lead researcher and the CTs in various roles such as: co-researchers; inter-rater reliability group members and respondent validators. Data were collected at different times, such as: before workshops, in workshops, after workshops, away from workshops in schools between workshops, before SP, after SP. The timescale and chronology of the intervention are outlined in table 10. Aside from myself and the M-CoP members acting as researchers, there were others who contributed to the research analysis. I used three colleagues as critical friends, bouncing ideas off them and seeking feedback. 2 critical friends engaged in coding through the inter-rater reliability process (See appendix J for sample of coding). Another listened to the audio recording of an extended focus group discussion with the sole purpose of critiquing whether or not I was leading CTs[33]. As

[33] My colleague wrote the following: "It would be so easy to lead, I think you have done a really good job. Your prompts are open, they are not judgmental and you constantly reassure your participants of the value of their opinion…If I was to provide a small piece of constructive criticism…Early on, there was one potential leading moment, but you quickly corrected yourself and it did not impact on the participant's views (I feel)" (Critical Friend, email)

will be presented, various data collection methods were employed. Given the nature of the study, multiple methods informed the next steps in data collection in order to move the analysis forward (Denscombe, 2010).

#### 3.7.1.1 Mentoring Community of Practice Questionnaire (See appendix K)

Questionnaires are said to be the "favoured tool" of researchers globally (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003, p. 7). This method allowed me to collect data in a way that was inexpensive, structured and manageable (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). A self-designed style was adopted, allowing for the questionnaire to be "highly specific" (Reid, Hopkins and Holly, 1987, p. 124). 'Group administered Questionnaires' were used as they have a more personal touch and there was the opportunity to bring the CTs together for the workshops (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). The length of time it took to complete the questionnaire fell within the 10-15 minutes range, as recommended by Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003).

This 'Mentoring Community of Practice Questionnaire [M-CoP-Q] followed a multiple style approach including: i) General Information (Open Profile Orientation); ii) CPDL, CoP and mentoring perceptions (Stimulated Recall Orientation) and; iii) Pre-group items. Acting as a "face-sheet", the first section allowed me to gather rich demographic information, such as: age, number of years acting as a CT; number of years acting as a CT in the university partnership (Bryman, 2016). Such information was important because it helped me to interpret CTs' responses with a contextual eye (Bryman, 2016). This section of the M-CoP-Q was completed at the beginning of the first M-CoP

workshop.

As the study proceeded, I wished to investigate if there was any change in CTs' perceptions surrounding: 1) their CPDL; 2) their engagement in and with mentoring and; 3) their engagement in and with the M-CoP. Responses were gathered also at the start of the first workshop. The opening two sections, i) and ii) named above began with closed questions (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). Closed questions included the following: i) ordinal ranking questions (Hartas, 2010); ii) nominal scaled questions whereby CTs were asked to state their strength of agreement or disagreement with a statement (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). Such questions directed respondents to explain their choice (Thomas *et al,* 2005); iii) dichotomous 'categorical response' closed questions, which allow the respondent to choose between only two response options e.g. yes or no (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003); iv) 'multiple answer mode' 'multiple choice' questions were included to ascertain which professional development and / or learning activities the respondents had engaged with in the previous year (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). CTs were instructed that they could tick more than one item (Cohen *et al.,* 2007) and finally; v) an 'other' option allowed the respondents to include any choice which the researcher did not consider (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). 'Any other thoughts' options "can encourage respondents to give you a new angle on the topic" (Munn and Drever, 1995, p. 25).

The majority of the questions in the M-CoP-Q were open ended, for example: '3 d) What barriers have there been to your role as a mentoring cooperating PE teacher in the last year?'. Open questions allow CTs to answer in their own words without the shackles of response choices and this can often lead to unpredicted responses (Bryman,

2016).

After the first workshop, CTs' questionnaire responses were collated and emailed to each of the CTs. Repeated measures were utilised through a stimulated recall approach. CTs were informed that they would "later be asked to revise this: 'has anything changed?'" (Participant Information Sheet). Meyer (2002) recommends the practice of 'stimulated recall' whereby CTs review data, which they had contributed previously, before commenting on the items again. CTs were given time at the start of each workshop to review and then write a comment, stating whether their perceptions had changed and if so, why (Meyer, 2002). Such a practice is said to encourage "us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from a particular position at specific times; […] for it is known differently dependent upon where one sits in time in relationship with one's life" (Richardson, 2001, p. 36).

In advance of workshops, CTs were provided with pre-group questions, against which they were prompted to write a response (in their electronic M-CoP-Q previously emailed). This approach allowed CTs to adopt a position in relation to the issues before the discussion began (Sussman, Burton and Dent, 1991; Berg, 2004). These were requested at the start of each workshop. These questions broached the topics up for exploration in the workshop (Berg, 2004).

#### 3.7.1.2 Participant Observation of PALAR M-CoP Workshops

As Robson (2002) states: "what people may do may differ from what they say they do" (p. 310). With the best of intentions, self-report measures can lead CTs to

portray what they believe to be socially desirable (Hobson and Townend, 2010; Thomas *et al.*, 2012). As such, adding observations to the data collection plan was supplementary to the questionnaire method (Cohen *et al.,* 2007; Glesne, 2010).

CTs were explicitly observed in the PALAR M-CoP with respect to three foci:

a) their evolving perceived engagement with and understanding of mentoring CPDL activities. These could be somewhat verified: CTs' interaction with mentor CPDL activities, the sharing of their stories, my observation of UTs and the feedback I received as SP coordinator.
b) their engagement as M-CoP members and the development of the M-CoP;
c) their engagement in and with PALAR processes and activities, and the development of the PALAR strategy.

Bryman (2016) insists on the importance of keeping the observation schedule simple as too many categories can make it difficult. As recommended by Goetz and LeComte (1984), the semi-structured observation schedule included an in-exhaustive list of what to potentially observe for (See appendix L). This was placed at the top of the observation logbook, which will be described below. However, as a PALAR study, there needed to be a degree of flexibility. Therefore, the semi-structured schedule was used as a rough guide.

Issues of reactivity need to be acknowledged. As Glesne (1999) asserts, people can become "jaundiced by the presence of outsiders who stay too short a time to get the

picture that local folks have of themselves" (p. 45). Therefore, it was important to share with CTs that, the study was about "learning from people" as opposed to "studying people" (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). To limit the initial effects of 'reactivity' during observations, it was crucial that I wore my participant hat (e.g. CPDL and M-CoP facilitator) more than my researcher hat (e.g. observer) (Denscombe, 2010). Admittedly, as Hales (2015) maintains: "negotiating multiple roles was a challenge" (p. 86). I found it "very difficult to both observe and participate" in the workshops (Hales, 2015, p. 86). As introduced earlier, my position in this study swung from 'observer as participant' to 'participant as observer' (Glesne, 1999). Initially, I sensed that CTs' main priority was action learning (Woods and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). However, as the study proceeded, my engagement swung to the observer end of the spectrum to prevent me from losing my researcher eye (Glesne, 1999). I also balanced this by video-recording the M-CoP workshop which allowed me take the helm as a participant and facilitator (Hales, 2015).

Discussions are "fleeting things, in which an enormous and wide-ranging amount of information can be shared in a short time period" (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003, p. 47). Recordings are said to help overcome the understandable limitation of human memory and our tendency to put a sheen on what people say and do (Heritage, 1985). I was able to rewind and listen to incidences repeatedly (Thomas *et al.,* 2005). Resultantly, it was easier to identify who said what and also whether the views came from a range of people or one dominant participant (Bryman, 2016). To limit the effects of reactivity, I provided CTs with the rationale for recording them through the Participant Information Sheet. I stated that video recording would "allow for better observation later". I added that I would "find it difficult to learn and observe at the same

time". During the workshops, it was important to merely 'jot' notes as much as possible, as it is difficult to remain unobtrusive "if you spent most of your session furiously scribbling down notes" (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003, p. 135). To prevent the above, field notes were mostly taken immediately or soon after engagement with CTs (Silverman, 2006).

The observation logbook (See appendix M for raw data sample), included the following field-note column headings: i) who or with whom; ii) when and how; iii) what (behavior, transcribed dialogue); iv) how and where?; v) why? and finally, vi) observer memos / comments (reflections, patterns) (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). I attempted to follow Wolcott's (1994) recommended steps for conducting effective observations. Initially, I conducted a sweeping observation. Secondly, I observed for nothing in particular at which point things jumped out as unusual. Then, I observed to identify paradoxes and problems as this helps to highlight interactions more deeply. This ultimately led me to transcribe the dialogue of the CTs as they engaged in the M-CoP through PALAR activities.

#### 3.7.1.3 'Reflective Learning Journal' and 'Learning Journey Plan'

As noted above, CTs were tasked to reflect upon their experiences and development, or lack thereof, in a reflective learning journal between workshops. Keeping a reflective journal is said to facilitate CTs to learn from experience (Kolb, 1984) and to take necessary actions as they reflect on their progress (Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). It was intended that engaging with a journal would prompt reflexivity in CTs (Richardson, 2001). As previously described, CTs were provided with 'Learning

Journey' packs. This pack included information on reflective approaches, which they could adopt. This included: some helpful 'tips' for reflection; 'prompts' for reflection; 'questions' to pose for reflection; 'sentence starters' for reflection (Schön, 1983).

As previously introduced, based on their ongoing reflections, CTs were asked to complete a 'Learning Journey Plan'. They were asked to set targets for their development between one workshop and the next. This was shared with CTs through both email and as a shared Google document. This allowed them to share privately or publicly. See a screenshot below in Table 9.

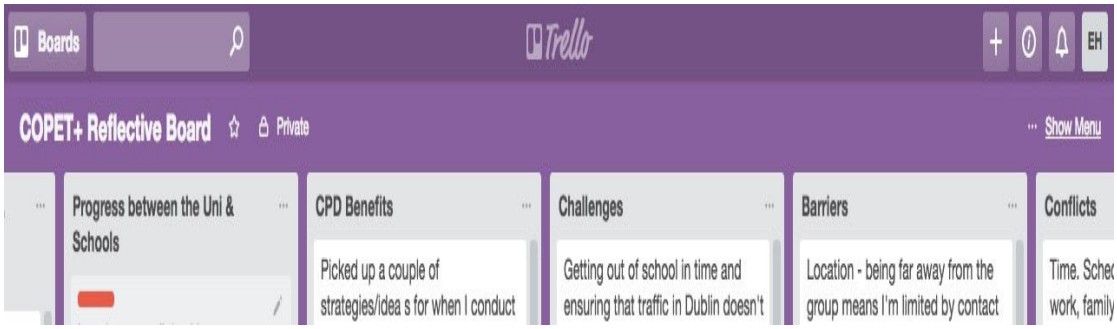
Table 9 'Learning Journey Plan'

| CT | Target | Developmental Activity | When by? |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sean** | "*To help the mentee to identify the learning opportunities that have taken place in their lesson and to ensure this learning process is planned for*" | "*Use video analysis of lesson matched with video analysis on feedback conversation. Allow mentee to comment on whole process.*<br>*Redo lesson plan having watched analysis of lesson and feedback*" | "*May 2015*" |
| **Aidan** | "*Helping the student teacher distinguish between subject knowledge, planning and teaching improvements through better questioning*" | "*While observing a student's lesson, consult more with their lesson plan to break down why issues arise, lack of subject knowledge, planning issues or poor teaching*" | "*At this stage of the year, try and accomplish before the end of the current school year*" |

Based on their actions, CTs were encouraged to reflect using the reflective journal pages. They submitted these at workshops if they felt comfortable doing so. Some CTs

shared on the shared 'Trello' Reflection Wall illustrated below in Figure 3-11.

Figure 3-11 'Trello Reflection Wall' Screenshot

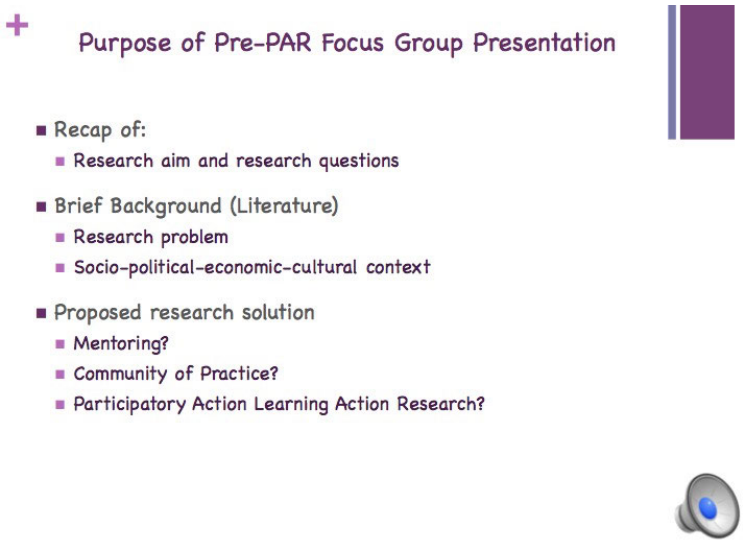



This reflection wall was offered so that, those who were comfortable with opening up their own minds for others to peer inside, could do so. Such practice takes time to engage with and to develop and, as such, only a few CTs engaged with it and with limited frequency.

#### 3.7.1.4 Extended Focus Group Discussions

In advance of the focus group discussions, I emailed CTs a task. This task altered the design so that it would be considered an "*extended focus group*" (Berg, 2004, p. 137). This task involved the CTs watching and / or listening to a pre-recorded and pre-timed audio-visual presentation. As is illustrated on slide two of the presentation, I explained the rationale for the pre-focus group presentation.

Figure 3-12 'Pre-M-CoP PALAR Focus Groups Presentation Purpose Slide'




Similar to the pre-group questions, watching this presentation provided CTs with time to gather their thoughts (Sussman *et al.,* 1991). It is believed that this can make CTs less vulnerable to 'groupthink', as it can help them to feel more secure in their contributions and thus, to speak up (Sussman *et al.,* 1991; Berg, 2004). This was particularly important if CTs did not agree with the conclusions I later presented in the extended focus group. CTs were asked to jot down some notes in advance to help them to gather their thoughts (Richardson, 2001). Focus group discussions provided CTs with "a sense of validation at the opportunity to voice their opinions" (Waterworth *et al.,* 2016, p. 66). This prepared the CTs for the focus group discussions.

> A focus group is a carefully planned and moderated informal discussion where one person's ideas bounce off another's creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue (Anderson, 1996, p. 200).

From the inception of the study, I was conscious that:

> People are social creatures who interact with others. They are influenced by

> the comments of others and make decisions after listening to the advice and council of people around them (Krueger and Casey, 2000, p. 34).

Such a setup allowed CTs to cognitively spark off one another, raising one another's awareness of discrete nuances and angles which alone, might not have risen to their consciousness (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

Once data had been analysed from the fourth M-CoP workshop, three extended focus group discussions were organised including nine CTs. The first of the three, which took place in June 2016, included: Ellen, Niamh, and Aidan. The second involved: Aoife, Oisin, Mary and Sean the final one included: Eamonn and Padraig. It was challenging, as the findings will explain, for all CTs to find time to come together (Kearney *et al.,* 2013). However, leaving some time between focus groups allowed me to analyse the focus group data. Whilst the structure of the second and third focus group remained largely consistent with the first, the data from focus group one provided enough insight to justify the inclusion of further themes under research question 3. For example, empowerment levels and critical consciousness levels were considered in focus groups 2 and 3. As MacKenzie *et al.* (2012) note, activities are difficult to standardise as PALAR promotes a fluid and context specific design. "As issues arise and relationships develop, the methods and activities conducted are necessarily dynamic, requiring adaptation and revision" (MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012, p. 13). Morse (2015) adds that later discussions can be used to confirm data from previous ones and as such, participants' focus can change. A guided semi-structured interview script was prepared for ethical approval prior to the study beginning (Patton *et al.,* 2005). However, given the participatory and democratic thread which ran throughout the research process to that

point, a traditional focus group would have felt out of place for me and I anticipated, more importantly, for the CTs. In an attempt to explain why we were using an extended focus group approach, I visually presented CTs with an extract from my reflective journal and allowed them to read it. I then stated the following:

> In the beginning, I had planned questions to ask in the focus group and read a lot about how to conduct an effective focus group but as we proceeded with PAR[-PALAR] workshops and I got feedback about how you work best, it didn't feel right [and] was not good enough for you and wasn't in keeping with the PAR[-PALAR] strategy...I wanted to remain respectful of your voices and decided that I would present the findings so far to you guys and check them with you and use them as a platform for further discussion ('Pre-M-CoP PALAR Focus Groups' Powerpoint presentation).

What sets PALAR aside from most research strategies is CTs' involvement in its evaluation (MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012, p. 12). As MacKenzie *et al.* (2012) state: "it operates on principles of democratic participation, cooperation and empowerment by providing the examined community with the opportunity to review and critique the research process" (p. 12). Therefore, I wished to involve the CTs in the drawing of conclusions from the data (Fletcher *et al.,* 2010). It was very important to "check that what I was inferring is what people were meaning to say" (Hales, 2015, p. 83). The extended focus group discussions offered the CTs the opportunity to verify or refute the findings as I interpreted them. Aoife and Oisín also read a draft of the thesis write up and confirmed that they would not change it, as it was representative of their voice

as a community. The use of respondent validation helps me to stand over the credibility of the conclusions which I will draw in the findings section (Silverman, 2006).

Acting as moderator in this scenario, I facilitated the discussion instead of leading it (Denscombe, 2010). A powerpoint presentation was used (See appendix N: 'M-CoP PALAR focus groups' powerpoint presentation initial slide). CTs were also provided with a handout of the slides which included a space for note taking. CTs were encouraged, and provided with time, to make notes. I shared the dual purpose of the focus group with the CTs: 1) "Member validation: can co-researchers confirm my interpretations?" and 2) "Generate further data to improve theoretical saturation: is a theory a one off or agreed more widely?" ('M-CoP PALAR focus groups' powerpoint presentation). All CTs were asked the same set of primary questions (Curtner-Smith *et al.,* 2008) and were provided with the same data, with the exception of the two additions noted above for focus group two and three. The structure went as follows:

a. CTs were posed with the main research question: "In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can CTs be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for PE pre-service teachers through engagement in a mentoring CoP?". On the slide handout, they were asked: "To what extent do you agree that COPETs can (please circle)?" and they were provided with a likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). They were also asked to "please explain why" CTs were given time to reflect, respond and jot down their reasoning. They then discussed their answers. Asking general questions first, is recommended as it makes it easier for CTs to become comfortable (Drever,

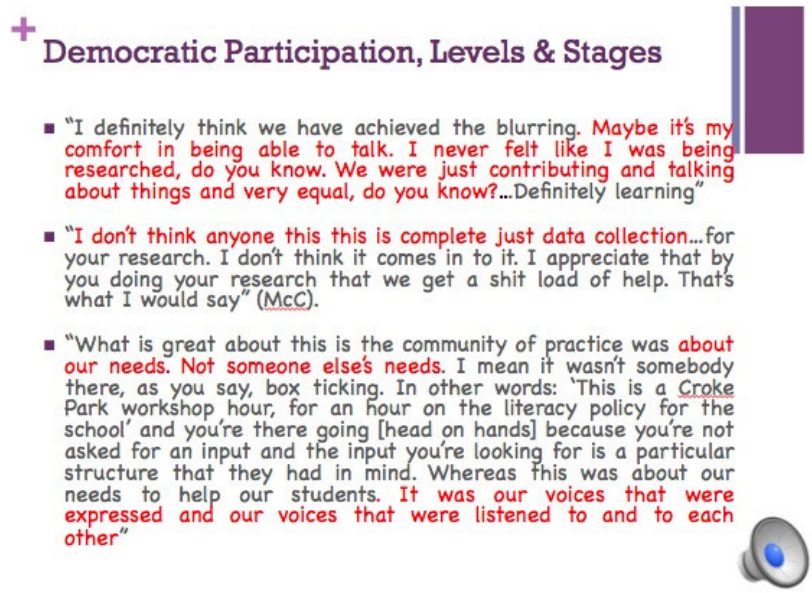
1997; Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003).

b. ‘Essential questions’ explicitly targeted the focus of the study (Berg, 2004). In turn, each of the four key research questions outlined in the ethics form presented above, were posed.

c. After each essential question was posed, there were a number of short reflective activities where CTs were directed to answer a question in writing. Berg (2004) warned that “group effect” can skew individual perspectives (Berg, 2004, p. 137). Therefore, permitting CTs time to write down their thoughts helps them to consolidate their positions prior to having them tested (Morgan, 1997). Different styles of question were included as necessary, such as: ordinal ranking questions (Hartas, 2010); nominal scaled questions (Cohen *et al.,* 2007); categorical closed response questions e.g. yes or no or less or more (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003) and ‘multiple answer mode’ (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). CTs were familiar with all of these types of response through previous data collection methods and of course, PALAR activities.

d. CTs were then provided with thematic findings to the research question in focus. For each finding, they were provided with raw data e.g. extracts of quotes verbatim. See example below in Figure 3-13.

Figure 3-13 Verbatim Findings Slide




Once these had been presented, CTs discussed the findings and data in the light of the question. They were prompted to refute or corroborate my conclusions and to provide further insight. Some judge the success of a focus group based on the degree to which CTs are also allowed to uncover new aspects which had not been in the researcher's conscious mind (Morgan, 1997; Hobson and Townsend, 2010). This is reflected in the evolution of the foci for focus group two and three. This aligns with the meta-design approach, which promotes adaptive process (Giaacardi and Fischer, 2008).

e. Compromising between more structured and less structured approaches, I used the 'funnel' strategy, beginning more broadly and then narrowing the focus somewhat but still allowing for CTs to digress where relevant (Morgan, 1997; Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). At this point, 'probing questions' were used to dig deeper into the story and to draw out more details (Berg, 2004; Drever, 1997). Taking this approach really maximized CTs "*speaking their minds*" and

allowed for exploration as opposed to mere validation (Denscombe, 2010, p. 175).

f. At the end of each thematic finding, CTs were prompted to return to their written response to the essential research question in focus and reflect on whether their answer was the same or different and why. They then moved on to the next essential research question.
g. After all of the essential research questions had been discussed, CTs returned to their response to the general research study question and reflected on and discussed whether their answer was the same or different and why.

Presenting verbatim accounts allowed me to provide rich and detailed support for my conclusions and prevented me from presenting a reconstruction of realities (Bryman, 2016). This enhanced the trustworthiness of the conclusions I present (Guba and Lincoln, 1981 cited in Bryman, 2016). Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, (2013) warn researchers to take explicit steps to protect against the "personal agenda, personal demons, or personal "axes to grind," which skew the ability to represent and present fieldwork and data analysis in a trustworthy manner" (p. 294). The central involvement of the CTs in the drawing of conclusions was one such important step.

Based on the same rationale as the M-CoP workshops, the focus groups were video-recorded, observed and transcribed (using the same format as the participant

observation logbook).

#### 3.7.1.5 Artifacts and Formal Documents

PALAR activities involved CTs engaging in and with artefacts. These are resources which act as a stimulus for helping CTs to figure out what they think and how to express themselves. They can offer useful insights (Creswell, 2003). They also help CTs to participate in a dynamic and interactive way (Waterworth *et al.,* 2016; Thompson, 2005). Many resources were used to help bring individual voices to the front but also to support the development of collegiality (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). For each workshop, a list of resources was planned. Figure 3-14 is an example of such a list.

Figure 3-14 PALAR M-CoP Workshop 2 Resources List

**COPET+ Community of Practice Workshop 2 Outline**

**Workshop 2 Resources:** Movie Clapperboard; Definition Circle Laminates; Collaboration V Cooperation Handout for Folders; Horn, Bell, Harmonica, Squeezey Chicken; Questionnaire; Time Capsules; Post-its; Jigsaw pieces; Lego bricks; Markers; Pens; Marbles and Marble bag; Gaps-Conflicts diagram; Feedback Sheets; Feedback laminates; Learning Conversation Criteria Sheets; Learning Conversation Clip; Whiteboard, Stand and Paper; Video recorder, 3 Dictaphones (Display PAR resources created in the previous workshop around the room).

Whilst artefacts were used for 'action learning purposes', they were also designed to generate data for 'action research' purposes. As such, some artefacts were collected in and photographed for analysis (Creswell, 2003).

## *3.8 Mapping methodologies to the research questions*

Table 10 overleaf highlights the data collection methods utilized to answer the

research questions. As per meta-design theory (Golson and Glover, 2009), as data were collected, research questions evolved.

Table 10 Mapping Methodologies to Formal Research Questions

| ***Research Questions*** | ***Methods for Answering Research Questions*** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M-CoP Questionnaire* | *PALAR M-CoP Workshop* | *Extended Focus Groups* | *Artefacts & Document* | *Stimulated Recall / Pre-group Qs* | *Reflective Learning Journal* |
| Main Research Q: "*In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?*" | | | | | | |
| 1. Can a PALAR M-CoP act as a transformative CPDL vehicle for CTs' growth; and if so, what elements of the CPDL model support growth? | | | | | | |
| 2. Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support the identification of complex barriers to growth and CPDL implementation; and if so, what are these barriers; who poses them and how do they impact CTs' growth and CPDL implementation? | | | | | | |
| 3. Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support CTs to alleviate complex barriers to mentor growth & CPDL implementation; and empower them to overcome such barriers and if so, how? | | | | | | |

### *3.9 Data Analysis*

Too often, research reports are heavy on the "what" (e.g. findings / outcomes) and too light on the "how" (e.g. how the finding was arrived at / process) (Miles *et al.,* 2013, p. 294). As such, in order to instil some confidence in the conclusions drawn from the data, I will map the procedural rationale of the data analysis (Miles *et al.,* 2013, p. 294).

Charmaz (2014) acknowledges that data analysis methods, as well as the researchers' and participants' "multiple standpoints, roles, and realities" are situated "in the historical, social, and situational conditions of its production" (Charmaz, 2017, p. 299). As such, because this was collaborative social research, data in this study were collected with CTs as key stakeholders and their feedback was used to help make sense of the social world and to solve problems (Berg, 2004). This study sought to identify if change could occur over time. This was compatible with grounded theory, as it addresses how researchers engage with the data and emerging analysis, thus prompting action and progress (Charmaz, 2017). It was important to unveil discoveries through data collection and analysis at different phases (Thomas *et al.,* 2005). There was an assumption "that people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectical processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them…Thus, social reality does not exist independent of human action" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 521). During data collection and analysis, I made discoveries and experienced "jolts of awareness", which shook my taken for granted assumptions (Charmaz, 2015, p. 1615). Whilst grounded theorists have been criticised for merely being descriptive and thematic with

coding, I attempted to ask analytical questions of the data, to extend my thinking and to construct theory as I engaged in analysis (Charmaz, 2015). Therefore, there was a repetitive interaction between the data collection and data analysis. with the analysis of data helping to shape the next steps in the data collection process (Denscombe, 2010). Throughout the transcription process, I found myself identifying "missed opportunities…to go beneath the surface…[and]…missed chances for elaboration;" of a CT's statement (Charmaz, 2015, p. 1615). This prompted me to address this at the next workshop or extended focus group (Charmaz, 2015). As a result, data collection and analysis evolved slightly as the study progressed (Thomas *et al.,* 2005). Mouly's (1978) 'inductive-deductive' approach was taken as the gathering of data and analysis worked in tandem with one another as I re-evaluated research questions whilst also interrogating the data (Hartas, 2010). Whilst certain research questions, categories and variables were pre-identified in order to direct the study to a degree, I worked in a state of 'constant discovery' and 'constant comparison' leaving me open to new codes (Rossman and Rallis, 2012).

### 3.9.1 *Modes of analysis: a synthesis of old and new*

As my 'audit trail' (See appendix O) reflects, I took many approaches to analysis and my approaches evolved over time. I printed off written transcripts and recorded my thoughts or codes and categories on them. Whilst I kept an electronic reflective journal, I also kept a physical paper reflective journal: one medium and one pocket-sized. At another time, I would type my analytic notes in the logbook or electronic journal. I found manual analysis to be very helpful. After some time, I input, for example, M-CoP workshop transcripts into NVivo and engaged in further analysis e.g. coding,

writing memos and annotations. Data collected later (e.g. extended focus groups) were transcribed in a logbook template which had been uploaded to NVivo and all analysis occurred in this software e.g. coding, writing memos and annotations.

### 3.9.2 *Stages of Analysis*

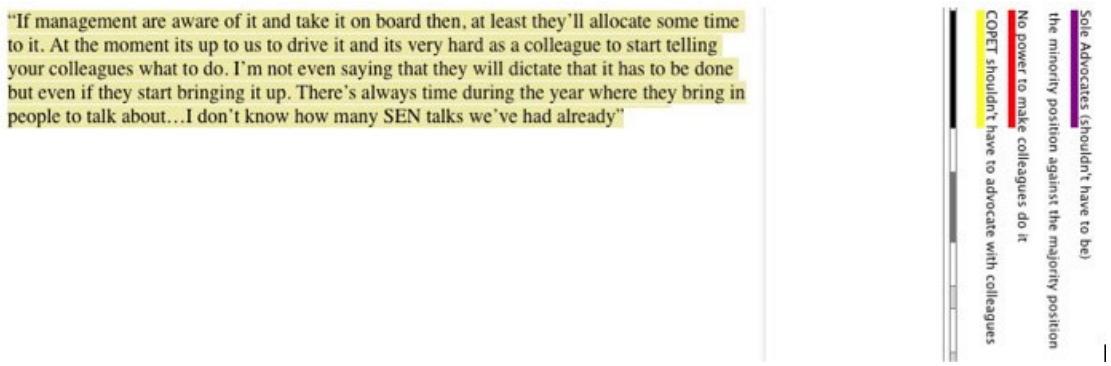
Prior to explaining the analytic processes and strategies, I should reiterate how creating transcripts of dialogue and writing field notes was part of the analysis journey. Completing them allowed me to become familiar with the data, bringing it alive (Denscombe, 2010). Once transcriptions were completed, I went through various stages of analysis. The analytic steps aligned well with Wolcott's (1994) previously outlined steps for conducting effective observations. I read and re-read the transcripts to delve deeper into what the content meant and to develop an empathetic understanding (Liamputtong, 2010).

As noted in the early stages of the chapter, I continually cross-referenced data with the research questions to establish the extent to which they had been answered (Robson, 2002). This led to me continually revisiting the research questions. Throughout the analysis process I engaged in data reduction, data display, conclusions and verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I also went through several phases of analysis and in particular, three coding stages: open, axial and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). Coding involves the systematic art of disassembling and reassembling data (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). Codes "serve as shorthand devices to label, separate, compile, and organize data" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 186). This process allowed me "to spot quickly, pull

out, then cluster all the segments relating to the particular question, hypothesis, concept or theme" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56).

Reduction of the data was achieved through the refinement, simplification and transformation of data from raw into something "more readily accessible, understandable, and to draw out various themes and patterns" (Berg, 2004, p. 39). Open coding involved the reduction of this data into clear and distinctive chunks, scrutinizing them for similarities and differences (Strauss and Corbin, 2008; Denscombe, 2010). Initially, I searched for every possible phenomenon in the data (Bryman, 2016) (See appendix P for manual open coding raw data). The data were assigned labels and were then compared with one another to decide where they belonged (Harry, Sturges and Klinger, 2005). Figure 3-15 below illustrated an NVivo screenshot of the coding strips associated with one piece of data:

Figure 3-15 NVivo Coding Strips




Once open coding was complete, codes were collapsed into categories where there were two or more related concepts (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2009). Figure 3-16 below

illustrates an NVivo screenshot of some overarching categories:

Figure 3-16 NVivo Overarching Categories

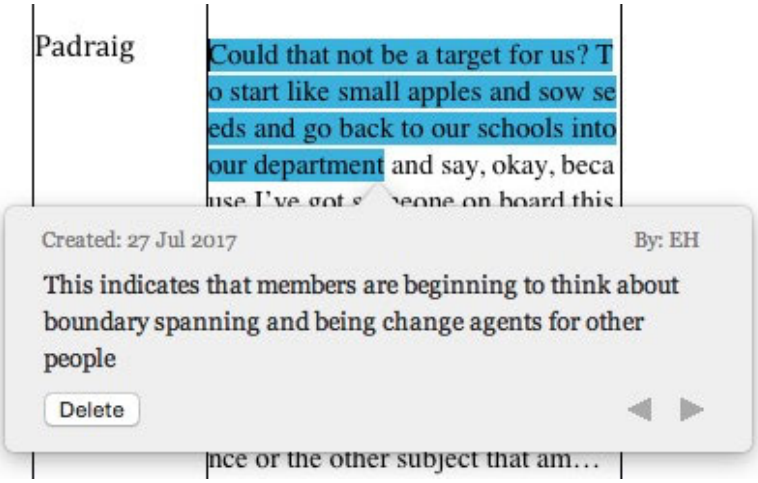

Whilst coding was an explicit strategy for theory construction, it was also engaged with reflexively (Charmaz, 2015). In an attempt to distinguish between codes and categories, I wrote "analytic notes" or "observer comments" in the M-CoP workshop and extended focus group logbook columns (Berg, 2004, p. 174). Whilst thick, rich descriptions and verbatim reporting is important, data analysis must go deeper than description to truly interpret the data (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984; Thomas *et al.,* 2005; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Taking this advice, I regularly extracted data, made a judgment and then wrote a "narrative vignette" (Erikson, 1986 cited in Thomas *et al.,* 2005, p. 355) or memo (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2007, 2009; Rossman and Rallis, 1998). Charmaz (2015) refers to the exercise as a researcher having "private conversations…with themselves as they take their codes apart and analyze what they might mean" (p. 1617). Instead of clinically slicing up the data, memo writing helped me to "explore [my] ideas, scrutinize and improve [my] codes, make conjectures, examine [my] assumptions, and express doubts" (Charmaz, 2015, p. 1617). As illustrated in examples below, these vignettes, memos and annotations recorded my reflections, ideas and comments (Cohen *et al.,* 2007).

Figure 3-17 Observation Memos

| Who / with whom (initials)? | Q | What (behavior, dialogue etc?) | Observer Memos / Comments (Reflections, Patterns) | **Open Coding** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anon |  | Can I ask how ye feel the principals and senior management or school culture help? [anon] | [This is a question asked in reference to another participant stating that the principal can affect the culture]. This is a benefit of using PAR with a focus group: [Anon] feels as though [they] can ask questions or seek clarity and ask people to justify their position because Anon wants to understand. Anon isn't concerned that it might be 'my' question and he is stepping out of line. There is a democratic equality of participation which makes Anon feel [they are] in the position to do this ☺ | Open Dialogue; democratic participation; learning from difference |

Analytical notes were also taken later using the NVivo software in the form of annotations.

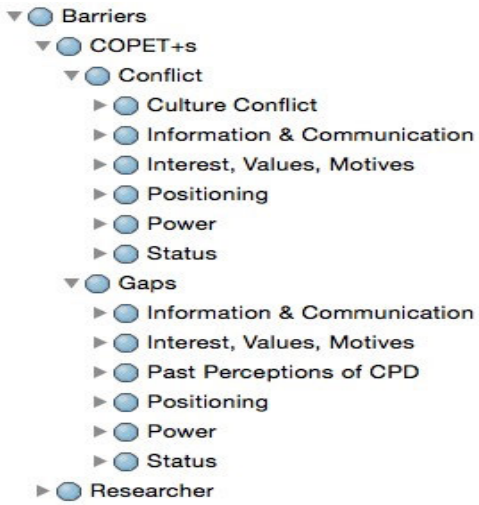
Figure 3-18 NVivo Annotations




This second stage, *axial coding*, involves the researcher digging more deeply into the data whereby the categories are compared to their sub-categories and codes are assigned to sub-categories based on the fact that they relate to one another in some way (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). As can be seen in figure 3-19, the category of 'barriers', was then split into: i) barriers for the researcher and ii) barriers for the CTs and then into: iii)

gaps and iv) conflicts. Under this category, more specific codes were assigned.

Figure 3-19 NVivo Categories and Sub-Categories




Below, is an more detailed example of an earlier 'Code Logbook'. This recorded the rationale behind the coding frame; the frequency distribution of codes and the reliability of such codes. This visually displayed the category, code / subcode. It made me accountable for my claims about whether it was a viable code or not based on how triangulated it was. See below.

Figure 3-20 Code Logbook

| Category | Initial Sub-category / Code | Justification<br>i.e. "*Verbatim*", Individual Case (IC), Mutliple Cases (MC), Multiple Sources (MS), Individual Multiple Phases (IMP), Multiple multiple phases (MMP) | Deviant Cases | Source i.e.<br>Questionnaire (Q), Obs (O); Artifact (A); Journal (J) | Research Question |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Benefits of engaging in CoP for them** | 1. Inspire me<br>2. Enthusiasm<br>3. *Learn Something*<br>4. Be more effective in what we do<br><br><br>5. Getting ideas from one another in the CoP | 1. IC<br>2. MMC<br>3. MC, MS, MMP (1 & 2)<br>4. MC, MS,MMP (1 & 2)<br><br><br>5. MC, MS | 2. Concern over it being a 'talking shop' and no more | 1. J<br>2. Q & O<br>3. Q & O<br>4. Q, O, Q (Stimulated recall)<br>5. Q, O J (Reflective Wall) | 1, 2 and 3 |

The process made me question the following:

- was it verbatim (in which case, it was italicised)?
- were there multiple cases or was it a one off piece of data?
- were there multiple sources providing data or just one and if so, which data collection sets did it come from? Therefore, I was engaged in the act of 'comprehensive data treatment'; not making a generalisation until enough data pointed to it (Silverman, 2006).
- were the data supporting the code / category across phases or just at the start or end of the study?

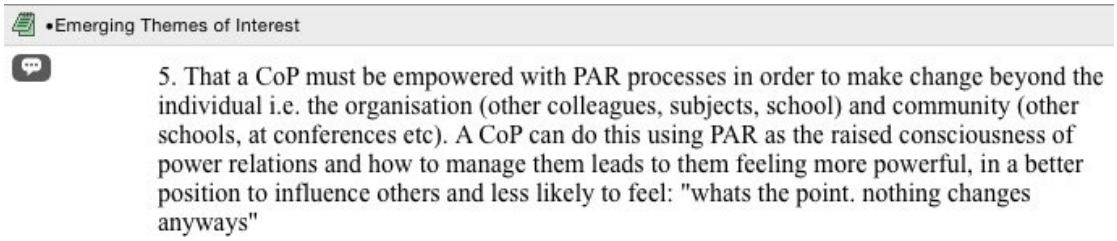
Using an analytic induction approach, as well as a constant comparison method, supported me to not falsify assumptions through searching for contradictory 'deviant cases' (Silverman, 2006; Miles *et al.,* 2013). As Nvivo records many of these statistics automatically, the software replaced this process to a degree later on in the process.

As Miles *et al.* (2013) highlight, at times, the researcher had moments of: "Whoa—that variable is not really one variable but two, or maybe even three" (p. 285). Doing this early in the coding process as illustrated by the coding stripes helped me to avoid "*monolithism*" or blurring of the data (Miles *et al.,* 2013, p. 285). As this research linked with many theories, this was necessary. Nvivo-10 was used to partition variables for safe keeping, allowed me to be left open to the possibility that further significant data might later validate or discredit it as a variable.

Finally, selective coding involves the researcher absorbing all the categories and

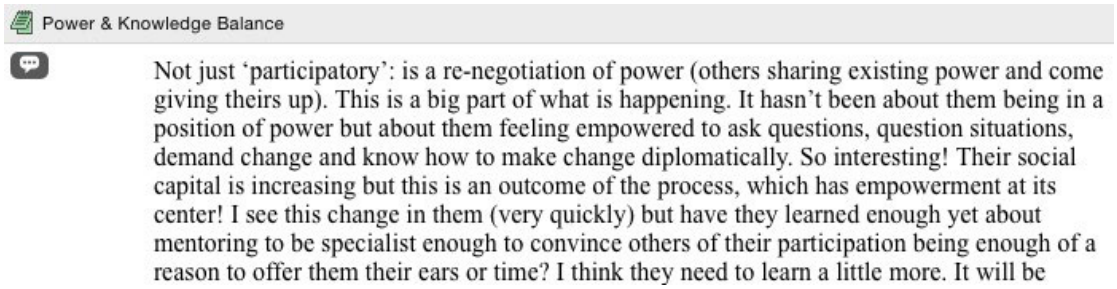
generating a theoretical framework (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). Essentially, the researcher generates a "story line" which integrates the categories determined by axial coding (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). At this phase, the researcher should be able to make more theoretical explanations of their data. To support this process, I kept a memo entitled: "Emerging Themes of Interest", wherein, I considered all the themes which I believed were emerging. See Figure 3-21.

Figure 3-21 Emerging Themes of Interest (NVivo Memo)




Once a theme appeared to grow in evidence, I created a new memo for that theme, fleshing out my theoretical thinking further. See Figure 3-22.

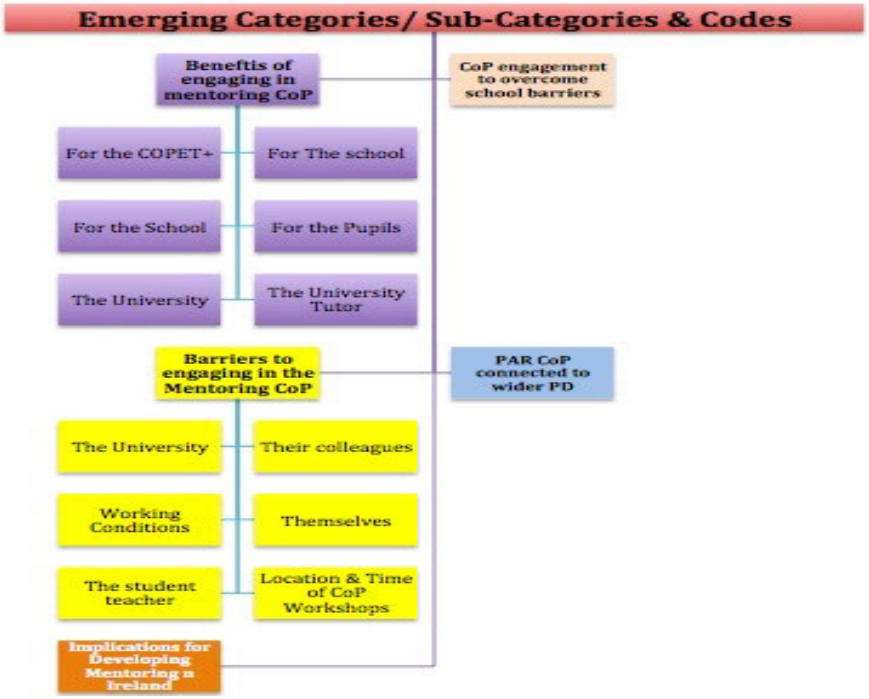
Figure 3-22 Thematic Memo (NVivo)




Many examples of how the data were displayed have been provided previously. The process described helped me to understand and visualize patterns in the data (Berg, 2004). Due to the iterative approach to data analysis, this was done throughout. Below is a visual representation of the 'Code Logbook' which was created and shared with my supervisor in May 2014. This highlighted that the data collection methods had yet to

inquire into research question 3. Therefore, the display enabled me to make informed decisions about the next data collection and analysis phase (Berg, 2004).

Figure 3-23 Code Logbook




### *3.10 Tactics for Analysis and Criterion for judging research findings*

Miles *et al.* (2013) present an array of "analysis tactics" which should be used to ensure unbiased analysis and the robust drawing and verification of conclusions (Miles *et al.,* 2013, p. 276). Tracy (2010) argued that for "qualitative research to be of high quality, it must be rigorous" (p. 841). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' as umbrella gauges for the quality of a research study. With these two gauges in mind however, it is important to acknowledge that all attempts to judge the research findings in this study are based on the position that 'theory-free knowledge' is neither realistic nor simply "'out there' awaiting discovery

but … [intsead is] … socially constructed" (Smith and McGannon, 2017, p. 25-26). This section will outline how I attempted to plan for both of these measures.

### 3.10.1 *Trustworthiness*

PALAR approaches are very focused on ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stringer, 2007 cited in Hales, 2015). Rossman and Rallis (2012) break the concept of trustworthiness into two concerns. Firstly: 'Is the study ethically conducted?' As there was a social element to this project, I was ethically obligated to my study population (Berg, 2004; Hulley, Stephen, Cummings, Steven, and Browner, 2006). Ethical issues relating to anonymity and confidentiality were previously outlined. Maxwell (2012) recommends that the researcher is cautiously proactive in the prevention of two threats to validity: researcher bias and reactivity. Issues related to reactivity were shared previously, for example in the 'trajectory' and 'positionality' sections. Hales (2015) defines 'researcher bias' as the "preconceptions and notions held by the researcher" (p. 83). Whilst this too has been touched upon, I will endeavour to add to this below. The second trustworthiness question is: 'is the study conducted competently?' I will attempt to answer this question. Trustworthiness of the study was enhanced by improving the credibility and transferability of the conclusions.

#### 3.10.1.1 Credibility

Validity is "the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (Hammersley, 1990, p. 57). In relation to the

believability factor, 'credibility' is the alternative for internal validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bryman, 2016). With respect to observations, researchers often have to answer the question: "how do you know they are telling the truth?" I used some of Denscombe's (2010) strategies to help me to "smell the rat" in the sample (p. 188). As Hammersley (1992) argues: "we must judge the validity of claims [about truth] on the basis of the adequacy of the evidence offered in support of them" (p. 69). As noted above, triangulation was explained. Other strategies will now be expanded upon slightly.

i) Prolonged engagement: Kearney *et al.* (2013) claim that the researcher should learn to trust their judgment and rely upon "their knowledge of the community as a basis for making strategic decisions about the research process" (p. 122). Because the study involved prolonged engagement (Creswell. 1998), I became more familiar with CTs. From a validity perspective, Morse (2015) claims "that spending more time on data collection…provides time for trust to be established with participants. With increased trust (and intimacy), you will get better, richer data. More will be revealed, and therefore, data will be more valid" (p. 1214). As Hales (2015) states: "this role granted me insights into the workings of the community that I might not have had with less time or less emersion" (p. 83).

ii) Inter-rater reliability and intra-observer reliability: Having to argue for any new code or category helps to make sense of how important it is or is not (Darlington and Scott, 2002). Due to the participatory nature of the study, with respect to arriving at conclusions from the study, it was important to invite the CTs to engage in data analysis (Somekh, 2006 cited in Fletcher *et al.,* 2010). Smith and McGannon (2017) assert that

verification is problematic because the lead researcher is not able to ascertain with conviction, whether or not the participants have actually engaged with the process. However, respondent validators engaged in analysis of the data, as opposed to merely verifying or refuting the codes. Mary and Padraig engaged in and with the coding of two different M-CoP workshop transcripts. As has been recommended, in advance of doing so, they were provided with professional development about coding (Glassman and Erdem, 2014).

iii) Combined Member Checking Approaches: In addition to the cross checking of codes, 'member checking' was employed (Waterworth *et al.,* 2016). It is said that by involving the participants "in checking and confirming the results", researcher bias might be reduced (Birt *et al.,* 2016, p. 1802). Through the presentation of findings in the extended focus groups, I sought to ascertain whether or not I had interpreted the data correctly (Bryman, 2016). Culver and colleagues (2012) identify this process as one of the most crucial for promoting credibility. However, it can be challenging for member checkers to "step outside of their own experiences and history or rise above and separate themselves from the study of the social world" (Smith and McGannon, 2017, p. 7). To alleviate these issues, the following strategies were adopted: i) member check extended focus groups and ii) member check using synthesized analyzed data and member reflection (Harvey, 2015).

a) Member check extended focus groups: Scholars have used focus groups to facilitate participants to explore their attitudes and beliefs with respect to the data as they interacted with one another (Birt *et al*., 2016). However, in keeping with the ontological and epistemological character of the research design, member checking was combined

with ‘extended focus groups’, with CTs being presented with an interpretation of the findings in the light of the research questions and through the use of verbatim quotes. Some scholars claim that sufficient thinking time is rarely afforded to properly facilitate participants to refute the interpretation of findings and that lead researchers too often fail to disclose any disagreements made by participants throughout the member checking process (Smith and McGannon, 2017). Extended focus groups facilitated CTs to formally take time to consider the interpretations of findings and to both write their personal responses and also to discuss them in depth. This allowed for them to explore the interpretation of findings thoroughly, and to reflect upon not just consensus and verification, but also potential dissensus and refutation (Schinke, Smith and McGannon, 2013; Smith and McGannon, 2017).

b) Synthesised member checking and ‘member reflection’: This element of the member checking process leans on the approach of Harvey (2015), who adopts Charmaz’s (2006) grounded theory approach. In this case, in addition to validating results, CTs are afforded the opportunity to reflect upon the researcher’s interpretation in the light of their own personal experiences, which may add to the data in a socially constructivist way (Birt *et al*., 2016). As with Birt *et al*. (2016), CTs were provided with a summary of each thematic finding in the light of the research questions. Interpretations were outlined and were contextualized using anonymized illustrative quotes. CTs were asked to answer the research question and to justify their response by writing their explanation. This combined approach helped to overcome a variety of weaknesses associated with member checking. Critics question whether or not member check participant voices are stifled by power relations between others (Smith and McGannon, 2017). It is proposed that this issue was addressed by the strategies used to develop

democratic participation and voice. It is important to share that CTs considered themselves to be part of the 'out-group' from the inception of the study. They identified barriers associated with colleagues within the profession not holding values and attitudes similar to theirs. Additionally, CTs were exposed to dissensus and diversity as each came from different schools with different school cultures. As such, they were capable of situating their experiences within the frame of a more realistic picture. This addressed Smith and McGannon's (2017) assertion that researchers do not often report disagreements uncovered within the data. Moreover, where research is longitudinal, participants can perceive that the findings no longer align to their existing views and as such, binary responses can be given (Smith and McGannon, 2017). However, CTs cyclically revisited previous positions through 'stimulated recall' and through repeated measures, such as the identification of barriers. It is proposed that CTs were more inclined to consider the findings as a social constructivist process, reflective of contradictions and change, as opposed to as a final outcome.

iv) Thick description and verbatim reporting: I built descriptive and internal validity by being as objectively factual, as possible (Morse, 2015). This was supported by the transcription of dialogue which allowed for an objective record of conversations to be taken verbatim (Berg, 2004). 'Thick description' in the form of rich detailed accounts support the trustworthiness of claims made in the findings section (Cited in Bryman, 2016).

v) Auditor, critical friends: Dependability and thus, trustworthiness, was bolstered by implementing an auditing method (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993 Cohen *et al.,* 2007; Stringer, 2007). My supervisor played the role of auditor at points, interrogating

whether procedures had been appropriate and whether theoretical claims were an appropriate leap (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Bryman, 2016). Consistent with the approach of Hobson, Maldarez, Tracey, Giannakaki and Pell (2006), I used her to ascertain content face validity of the M-CoP Questionnaire. She reviewed it and supplied corrective feedback in relation to its appropriateness for the project research questions. I then made the necessary modifications based on all suggestions, improving the validity and reliability of the tool.

In order to prevent "self-delusion" I employed the eye of critical friends and colleagues (Miles *et al.,* 2013, p. 296). Where inter-rater reliability and intra-coder reliability are considered to be less appropriate qualitatively, critical friends promote reflexivity as they challenge one anothers' knowledge construction (Cowan and Taylor, 2016 cited in Smith and McGannon, 2017; Cushion, 2018). As I reflected in an Nvivo memo: "having informal conversations with others about the research process would also prompt and provoke and test my thinking. I think that [Lenny] would be good for this. It is in her personality to carefully challenge you and help you see. I suppose it is her Samaratan training". I did find [Lenny] to be a wonderful sounding board as well as other academic friends who read drafts of my chapters and with whom I discussed my work. A fresh pair of eyes can shed new light on the data and conclusions, acting as a "devil's advocate" (Thomas *et al.,* 2005, p. 360).

### 3.10.2 *Transferability*

'Instead of judging the study based on external validity and generalisability, 'transferability' is recommended (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bryman, 2016). Findings

are generalised theoretically rather than statistically (Denscombe, 2010; Bryman, 2016). Denscombe (2010) acknowledges that though case studies may be unique, they are an example of a class of things, which are indeed broader (Hammersley, 1992; Denscombe, 2010). This methodology was designed to help the reader to understand the process of the inquiry (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). Raising the reader's awareness about the context, allows them to make judgments about whether they can transfer meaning to their own settings or not (Geertz, 1973). As mentioned above, this was supported through "thick description" (Bryman, 2016, p. 275) and using verbatim accounts.

### 3.10.3 *Authenticity*

The second umbrella criteria for judging a qualitative study is 'authenticity' (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). This relates more to how wide the impact of the research is politically (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). On account of PALAR being the chosen strategy, it is believed that the methods in this study supported the socio-political potential of the research in a number of ways:

i) '*Fairness*' relates to the degree to which the findings are representative of different perspectives within the sample (Le Compte and Preissle, 1993). For example, CTs were provided with various ways to express their views, both individually and as a group and they had the opportunity to validate or refute the conclusions drawn from the data.

ii) *'Ontological authenticity'* was intended as the researcher aimed to facilitate CTs to arrive at a better understanding of their social world (Bryman, 2016). For example, as per critical (Habermas, 1978) and complexity theory (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), CTs were

facilitated to discuss the conditions and barriers they faced in their environment and to reflect upon them in the light of others' contexts. Critical theory was reflected in CTs' setting of school based targets. In so doing, they were encouraged to analyse power dynamics and boundaries in their schools, in an effort to plan for change (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010, p. 216). There was an intention to develop greater critical consciousness in CTs and to improved their capacity to identify social resources at their disposal (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2016).

iii) *'Educative authenticity'* focuses on the degree to which the research supports participants to gain a greater appreciation of others' perspectives within their social setting (Bryman, 2016; LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). Through the sharing of barriers, progress and triumphs, it was hoped that CTs would become more aware and sympathetic of their M-CoP members' contextual challenges and opportunities. Additionally, through stakeholder analysis (Zuber-Skerrit, 2013) and the management of change (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013), CTs were supported to reflect upon the values, interests and motives of their school colleagues and to consider this in the light of the engagement and implementation barriers which their colleagues might have also been facing with respect to SP.

iv) *'Catalytic authenticity'* considers the degree to which the researcher has acted as a catalyst for change to occur in circumstances for CTs (Bryman, 2016). As is typical of a participatory researcher, I planned for the empowerment of CTs at all levels (Anderson *et al.,* 2015; Fletcher *et al.,* 2015). Through the PAL element of PALAR, activities were designed to individually empower CTs as mentors (Christens, 2012). Explicitly planning to "build the adaptive capacities of CTs to deal with change"

(MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012, p. 11), meant that there was an attempt to facilitate organisational and community empowerment (Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015).

v) *'Tactical authenticity'* considers more deeply the degree to which the researcher has inspired and enabled participants to act as change agents for themselves (Bryman, 2016). As noted above, CTs first needed to become more capable of identifying power imbalances (Freire, 1970; Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2016). It is proposed that when participants judge their situation to be unfair, they are more driven to act for change (Freire, 1970; Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2016). Throughout the process of target-setting, CTs were prompted to focus upon change initiation (Cooper *et al.*, 2016). Because CTs were facilitated to identify the contents of the workshops as well as their barriers and targets for achieving their goals, they were afforded the opportunity to "*choose their activities and transform their own life trajectories"* (Glassman and Erdem, 2015, p. 209). They were given the opportunity to be in charge of their 'change management' (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013).

Table 11 Summary of Key Timeline Events and Processes

| Timescale and Event Chronology | PALAR Activities and Processes | Who |
|---|---|---|
| Information Meeting (March, 2014) | *Information meeting to share:* study purpose, description, procedures, expectations with the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification. | AL CTs except Caroline and Mary (n: 10). |
| Workshop one (March, 2014) | *Completion of M-CoP Questionnaire at the start of the workshop*<br>*PALAR Processes*: Defining project goals and mission; Setting priorities; Exploring problems; Developing a resources management proposal; Monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous); Target Setting and Selection from Menu of embedded CPDL Activities | Aoife, Ellen, Ria, Niamh, Éamonn, Aidan, Padraig Abigail, Oisín (n: 9) |
| Between Workshops | *PALAR and Data Collection Processes*: Enactment and experimentation of developing practice in school, working towards targets and using menu of embedded CPDL activities to support target development; Reflection (and data collection) through the use of reflective journals and / or Trello wall; Completion of Pre-group workshop 2 questions / tasks, collected in at the start of the next workshop. Data also generated through interaction on the 'Trello' reflective wall'. Through enactment, CTs engaged with conflict management, change management and evaluation processes | All CTs |
| Workshop two (May, 2014) | 'Stimulus recall' completion of M-CoP Questionnaire at the start of the workshop; submission of pre-group question / task; responses and excerpts of reflective journal (if comfortable doing so)<br>Updates: Update evolving hopes and fears, mentoring identity and CPDL barriers; Share successes and triumphs and strategies.<br>*PALAR Processes:* Defining project goals and mission; setting priorities; exploring problems; solving a problem; managing a conflict; managing change; developing a resources management proposal; monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous) | Aoife, Ellen, Ria, Éamonn, Aidan, Padraig Abigail, Oisín (n: 8) |
| Between Workshops | Enactment and experiment of developing practice in school working towards targets and using menu of embedded CPDL activities to support target development; Reflection through the use of reflective journals and / or Trello wall; Completion of Pre-group workshop 2 questions / tasks. | All CTs |

| Timescale and Event Chronology | PALAR Activities and Processes | Who |
|---|---|---|
| FEILTE Preparation (September 2014) | PALAR Processes: CTs engaged in 'preparing to present' and 'celebrate' their work within the PALAR M-CoP. Defining smaller project goals; Setting priorities regarding what to present on what resources would be required and designed. CTs engaged with the community across various community spaces e.g. at the university with the facilitator and away from the facilitator and university and one CTs school. They worked collaboratively in smaller groups, engaging in person, through email, phone calls, text messages and 'whats app' messages. | Ria, Ellen, Aoife and Oisín, Éamonn (n: 5). |
| FEILTE (October, 2014) | CTs attended the conference working together to host one of the three showcases and 2 workshops, which focused on and involved:<br>"Becoming Reflection Facilitators" (workshop and showcase: Ria and Eimear, in Éamonn's absence); "Conducting Effective Learning Conversations" (showcase: Oisín and Eimear); "Mentoring CoP: What's in it for the mentors" (workshop and showcase: Aoife and Ellen). | Ria, Ellen, Aoife and Oisín (n: 4) |
| Workshop Three (October, 2014) | 'Stimulus Recall' completion of M-CoP Questionnaire at the start of the workshop; submission of pre-group question / task; responses and excerpts of reflective journal (if comfortable doing so)<br>Updates: Update evolving hopes and fears, mentoring identity and CPDL barriers; Share successes and triumphs and strategies, update and celebration of FEILTE experience.<br>*PALAR Processes:* Defining project goals and mission; setting priorities; exploring problems; solving a problem; managing a conflict; managing change; developing a resources management proposal; monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous). | Ria, Niamh, Éamonn, Aidan, Padraig Abigail, Sean, Mary, Caroline (n: 9) |
| Coding Workshop | Two CTs accepted the offer to learn about data analysis and to take the opportunity to take up the research process. Both attended a collaborative workshop at the university to learn about and engage with coding exercises. | Mary and Padraig |
| Coding Engagement | Two CTs independently manually coded the data for two different workshops based on the workshop transcription and the 'Workshop Semi-structured Observation Schedule and Field Log' table. Each CTs then send their coding through via whats app. | Mary and Padraig |

| Timescale and Event Chronology | PALAR Activities and Processes | Who |
|---|---|---|
| Workshop Four (April, 2015) | 'Stimulus Recall' completion of M-CoP Questionnaire at the start of the workshop; submission of pre-group question / task; responses and excerpts of reflective journal<br>Updates: Update evolving hopes and fears, mentoring identity and CPDL barriers; Share successes and triumphs and strategies.<br>*PALAR Processes:* Defining project goals and mission; Setting priorities; Exploring problems; Solving a problem; Managing a conflict; Managing Change; Developing a resources management proposal; Monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous). | Aoife, Ellen, Aidan, Oisín, Mary (n: 5) |
| Extended Focus Group 1 (March, 2016) | *In advance of focus group:* powerpoint presentation was sent through to PALAR M-CoP members, similar to the pre-group questions; asked CTs to consider the 5 research questions and what their position was on the data before coming in; the research ethics form is shared again.<br>*Structure of extended focus group:* Recap of PALAR Focus Group Purpose; Recap of Study Purpose and Research Questions; Present findings (so far); Questions (by me and CTs); Time to think and formulate your thoughts; Discovery by writing (notes); Discussion (consensus and dissensus); Revisit initial Study Questions (have our views changed); CTs' handout with their notes handed in as data. | Aidan, Niamh, Ellen (n: 3) |
| Extended Focus Group 2 (June, 2016) | As above but with additional data included from analysis of the first extended focus group. | Aoife, Sean, Oisín, Mary (n: 4) |
| Extended Focus Group 3 (August, 2016) | As above but with additional data included from analysis of the first extended focus group. | Éamonn, Padraig (n: 2) |

### *3.11 Thematic Analysis Outcomes*

Five key thematic findings were identified as a result of data analysis. These are presented in the next chapter but are introduced in table 12

Table 12 Thematic Findings Overview

| | Thematic Finding Overview |
|---|---|
| 1 | *PALAR M-CoP: A Transformative CPDL Vehicle*<br><br>- Transforming attitudes of CPDL and research 'as' CPDL<br>- Transforming mentoring and research practices and attitudes<br>- The 'how' and 'why' of transformative CPDL pedagogies |
| 2 | *Complex Barriers to Mentor Growth*<br><br>- Cultural barriers<br>- Structural barriers<br>- Relational barriers: issues related to: i) SP partners' lack of interest in, value for and motivation to engage in mentoring and SP and; ii) CTs' lack of power, status and position<br>- Barriers presented by: PSTs, colleagues such as other CTs, principals and school management; UTs and teacher unions |
| 3 | *Overcoming Complex Barriers to Growth*<br><br>- Alleviating cultural barriers<br>- Alleviating structural barriers<br>- Alleviating relational barriers<br>- Complex power strategies for overcoming power asymmetries<br>- Empowerment, growth and change |

The data sources are identified as follows: PALAR M-CoP Observation [M-CoP]; Mentoring Community of Practice Questionnaire [M-CoP-Q]; Artefact [A]; Group Artefact [GA]; Reflective Journal [RJ]; Stimulus Recall [SR]; Pre-group Questions [PGQs]; Learning Journey Plan [LJP]; Extended Focus Group Discussions [FG].

# 4 Findings

If you assume that there is no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume that there is an instinct for freedom, that there are opportunities to change things, then there is a possibility that you can contribute to making a better world - Noam Chomsky, linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historian, social critic, and political activist.

## *4.1 Introduction*

This chapter will recap on the research questions and will outline the thematic findings, as discovered through the process of data analysis.

Table 13 Recap of Research Questions Aligned to Thematic Findings

| | Research Question | Thematic Findings |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Can a PALAR M-CoP act as a transformative CPDL vehicle for CTs' growth; and if so, what elements of the CPDL model support growth? | *PALAR M-CoP: A Transformative CPDL Vehicle*<br><br>- Transforming attitudes of CPDL and research 'as' CPDL<br>- Transforming mentoring and research practices<br>- The 'how' and 'why' of transformative CPDL pedagogies |
| -2 | Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support the identification of complex barriers to growth and CPDL implementation; and if so, what are these barriers; who poses them and how do they impact CTs' growth and CPDL implementation? | *Complex Barriers to Mentor Growth*<br><br>- Cultural barriers<br>- Structural barriers<br>- Relational barriers: issues related to: i) SP partners' lack of interest in, value for and motivation to engage in mentoring and SP and; ii) CTs' lack of power, status and position<br>- Barriers presented by: PSTs, colleagues such as other CTs, principals and school management, UTs and teacher unions |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support CTs to alleviate complex barriers to mentor growth and CPDL implementation; and empower them to overcome such barriers and if so, how? | *Overcoming Complex Barriers to Growth*<br><br>- Alleviating cultural barriers<br>- Alleviating structural barriers<br>- Alleviating relational barriers<br>- Complex power strategies for overcoming power asymmetries<br>- Empowerment, growth and change |

## *4.2 PALAR M-CoP: A Transformative CPDL Vehicle*

The data presented in this section goes some way to answering the following research questions in Table 14.

Table 14 Thematic Research Questions: Transformative CPDL Characteristics for Growth

| Main Research Question |
|---|
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| 1. Can a PALAR M-CoP act as a transformative CPDL vehicle for CTs' growth as mentors and researchers if so, what elements of the CPDL model support growth? |

### 4.2.1 *Transforming Attitudes of CPDL and Research 'as' CPDL*

With respect to transformative CPDL outcomes, the CTs frequently compared the quality of the PALAR M-CoP model to the CPDL provision typically experienced. At the first PALAR M-CoP workshop, Aoife identified her fears that the CPDL model would be no more than another "talking-shop" (A). Padraig's comment further illustrates the attitudinal baggage

which the CTs carried from the inception of the study: "how often have we gone to CPDs where it is a lecture, something you're told never to do. Someone sitting at the front of the room. 60 people sitting there falling asleep after 20 minutes" (FG3). They admitted to spending time in the past "watching the clock" (Éamonn, FG3), thinking: "I've just given up an hour of my life there and it's fricken' painful...It's like scratching your eyes out!" (Aoife, FG2). Éamonn reported however that, "unlike other workshops, [he] never felt [he] was wasting [his] time" (SR). In particular, he admitted that he had "sacrificed a lot more to engage" in the PALAR M-CoP, in comparison with whole school CPDL (FG3). Instead of "sitting on in school for an hour or 2 hours" he committed to "a 3 hour round trip…for 2 hours" of CPDL (FG3). He added:

> "I'd get back in the car and get back on the road for an hour and a half…I'd be nearly buzzing…or I'd be talking to the wife coming in through the door: 'awh yeah I really enjoyed that work there' and even though I've been away from home for the five or six hours, I definitely felt the benefit from it" (FG3).

Éamonn shared: "I have had a very positive CPD[L] experience…This has been a positive community of practice" (SR). Padraig added that despite the CPDL not being certified, he was still motivated to engage:

> "This has been way better for me even though there hasn't been a stamp or… a certificate at the end to say you've done it…this has been by far the best thing I've done since I've been back in Ireland like, teaching 7 years" (FG3).

The data unveiled a relationship between the teachers' positive comments about CPDL experiences and the high degree of PALAR processes being engaged in. From the initial

PALAR M-CoP workshop, CTs maintained that they "didn't notice the two hours fly by" and "really enjoyed the 1st meeting of the group" (Éamonn, RW). The dual benefits of research 'as' CPDL are reflected in Sean's statement: "if it wasn't for…[this] research...I appreciate that by doing [the] research…we got a shit load of help" (Sean, FG2). PALAR processes were found to support sound pedagogical practices. Data were generated through PALAR processes, as artifacts were used and produced. Éamonn found it to be "engaging" (Éamonn, FG3) and valued the opportunity "to extract information… through imaginative and novel ideas" (RW). References were made to the innovative approaches of PALAR activities: "little flash cards" (Sean, FG2); "squeezey things" (Aidan, FG2) and "the hopes and dreams [and] putting stuff into the eggs" (Éamonn, FG3). The following comments indicate that PALAR activities and the use of artefacts supported the development of positive feelings about PALAR processes. Aidan expressed: "I'm so happy" (M-CoP2) and Oisín joked with another CT about their choice of artefact: "Yours is so lame in comparison to ours" (M-CoP). Éamonn added: "you had a rubber chicken here one day and you know, I know it might sound silly but it engaged the brain to a certain degree and it was different" (FG3). He further insisted that whilst "it was good work [and] got us thinking about different ideas", there "was a good fun element to it as well" (FG3).

The findings indicate that PALAR engagement helped CTs to overcome negative attitudes about research participation. Mary reported an enhanced impression of research: "100% definitely has made me think of research, you know in a positive way rather than, I don't know what I would have thought of it before" (FG1). Éamonn reported that PALAR "was definitely innovative as opposed to past experiences of research" (FG3). Ellen expressed that it exposed them to an alternative way of conducting research: "It kind of opens your eyes to what is there and whilst some of it mightn't be my style, it'd still make you think: how could I adapt it to

my style" (FG1). With respect to democratic participation, Padraig compared his participation in past research studies to this one: "we were involved in it but we weren't involved in it really" whereas with the PALAR M-CoP, "it feels as though you are really involved in this" (FG3). Mary insisted that she "never felt like [she] was being researched" because she participated in PALAR processes (FG2). Éamonn reported that not only were they "involved in the research", it facilitated them to "apply the process then in a real life setting, so you could see how it could impact…as opposed to…imagining how it might impact" (FG3). These data above demonstrate that teachers began their CPDL journey displaying negative frames of reference about CPDL and research engagement. However, the opportunity to discuss and re-evaluate fears and hopes unveiled that positive experiences with CPDL such as the PALAR M-CoP can restore or transform teachers' attitudes about CPDL and research.

In addition to a shift in attitudes and values, the CTs in this study indicated that a significant outcome of their PALAR M-CoP engagement related to the transformation of their practices as a mentor[34].

### 4.2.2 *Transforming Mentoring Practices and Research Participation*

#### 4.2.2.1 Growth as a mentor

Éamonn attributed the progress his PST made to his growth as a mentor: "I have definitely seen a massive improvement in [my PST's] teaching…and I would like to think that this process has been a massive contributing factor…Definitely being involved in the COPET

[34] Though CTs' reported that their engagement in the PALAR M-CoP enhanced their growth as a teacher, it is not reported here given the scope of the study. However, these findings are presented in Appendix R.

Programme has helped me to become a better mentor" (RJ). Overall, CTs believed that being involved with the PALAR M-CoP supported them to develop as mentors more than those who had not: "we are still way ahead of the posey by being here…I'm not saying we are the elite ones but we are engaged in the process and so surely we have to be better mentors than other people out there" (Éamonn, Focus Group [FG3]). Skills which they felt that they were developing included: being "a good listener"; being "a good observer"; being "assertive when required"; being "supportive"; being "professionally focused in the feedback" and being a "facilitator" (GA, M-CoP1). They also felt that they were "more organized" in their role (M-CoP3). Ria acknowledged that she was becoming more conscious of the need to gain "an understanding of where the student [wa]s [in their development] and why" (M-CoP3). This was evidenced by her setting a target to develop a better understanding of "what to focus on at specific stages of their development?" (LJP). Similar to Aidan, Éamonn realised that previously he had been somewhat judgmental by "measuring [the PST] against [his] own high standards…in terms of professionalism, as opposed to where they were at" (FG3). With respect to expectation, Padraig alluded to how engaging in the process provided him with opportunities for critical co-reflection, which supported reflexive thinking. This helped him to temper his standards; standards which were previously locked in by his own teacher education route as a mature PST in the United Kingdom. Demonstrating a developmental approach, he stated: "I did a post-grad, so I was probably a little more mature and expected more of myself because I was older whereas they are very young coming in to us…I think I step more in their shoes after going through this [process]…a bit of realism" (FG3). Padraig admitted that through PALAR M-CoP engagement, he began to dig more deeply in order to understand the PST's performance: "sometimes I might just ramble and I'll think I've seen something that's not correct and I'll try and eradicate it from their next lesson actually without delving a little deeper to see: why did they do it, why did they think it was right?" (FG3). As time passed, he found

himself asking a number of deeper questions to better understand: "how I ask it?; why am I asking it?; What's the answer I'm trying to find?" (FG3). Aidan also added, that he found himself "querying [his] intentions before casting a judgmental eye" (LJP). In addition to this, due to activities in the PALAR M-CoP, CTs began to refer to engaging in 'content focused mentoring' as opposed to just socialisation focused mentoring. As per educative mentoring models, CTs indicated that they were "helping the student teacher [to] distinguish between subject knowledge, planning and teaching improvements through better questioning" (Aidan, LJP). By setting this target, Aidan "consult[ed] more with their lesson plan to break down why issues arise" (LJP). He maintained that this helped the PST to distinguish whether their challenges lay in a "lack of subject knowledge, planning issues or poor teaching" (LJP). Moreover, whilst CTs agreed that "the mentee should receive feedback on the lesson observed" (Aoife, PGQ), they developed an appreciation of providing feedback beyond the 'here and now', so that the practical knowledge gained could be re-contextualised later. Aoife suggested that PST's should "be shown how it can be used throughout the other lessons or even in another environment" (PGQ). Ellen also reflected on the need to support PSTs to evaluate the outcome of lessons based on the challenges posed or lack thereof: "I found it necessary to point out the differences between the classes I was teaching behaviourally and the class he was teaching. There were no discipline issues in his class so he could afford to experiment more" (RJ).

Through the opportunity to agenda set, CTs identified that they wished to develop their ability to facilitate effective learning conversations and, as such, opted to engage in professional learning associated to this topic during workshops. Padraig highlighted that learning how to conduct a "learning conversation…was a big one for [him]" (FG3). CTs agreed that, initially, their overriding aim was to "help the [PST]…to achieve their potential" (Ellen, M-CoP3). However, they reported that their ambitions for the dyad partnership evolved throughout the

study. Aidan expressed his growing appreciation for less directive mentoring approaches by "allowing [the] [PST] to lead learning conversations more" (LJP). CTs identified the need to facilitate reflection in their PSTs' practice: "[we need] to try and teach them to be reflective in their practices [and] to spot or observe problems. If there [are] problems, you have to actually be aware of them" (Aidan, M-CoP1). Another common democratic development was the growing intention to adopt "good questioning rather than telling them their flaws and how [they could] do it differently" (Aidan, PGQ). Éamonn referred to "the journey [he had] been on with this" CPDL model. He pointed to how the CPDL "process would have enable[d]…or empowered [him] to get them to take ownership of the feedback" (FG3). Whilst in the past he admitted that he might have said: "'you did that right, right, right but that was brutal'", now he was more inclined to ask: "'what do you think worked well'…and it was more a question of reflective feedback for themselves and [to] get them to ponder on it" (FG3). CTs reported that they became more focused on supporting the PST to take responsibility for reaching their own potential. This validated their growth as a mentor: "What I would like my student teacher to be able to do is to be able to reflect on their own practice and that they don't need me to do it [e.g. reflect for them]…and I find that my student is getting it more and more bang on the nail" (Aoife, FG2).

#### 4.2.2.2 Growth as a Researcher

CTs reported that they "really enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in research" (Padraig, SR). As this chapter will present, all CTs engaged in PALAR processes implicitly.[35]

[35] Such PALAR processes included: defining project goals and mission; setting priorities; developing a resources management proposal; monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous); exploring problems; solving a problem; managing a conflict; managing change; evaluating a project; preparation for presentations; presentation and celebration.

However, the analysis of the data indicates that some CTs also opted to explicitly engage in and with more traditional research process. Aoife stated: "Every time we are conversing about our practice…Every time we are discussing what we are doing…that is research. It is an informal research, but its research" (FG2). She communicated that there are some "who say that it is not research unless it has been shared" (FG2). She pointed to the community having engaged with sharing: "we have been talking about how we have been sharing it in our schools, you know, the occasional conversation, now it's an informal sharing…[but]…there was some formal sharing at FEILTE" [The Festival of Education in Teaching and Learning Excellence'] Conference (FG2). Ria, Ellen, Aoife and Oisín engaged in the 'prepare to present' 'present' and 'celebrate' PALAR processes, as they showcased the work of the PALAR M-CoP at the Teaching Council's Annual Conference (FEILTE, 2014).[36] In advance of the FEILTE Conference, the 'Times Education Supplement' published a piece called: "Take Five: Big Ideas from FÉILTE Festival", in which they listed the PALAR M-CoP (M-CoP3).

According to CTs, because the PALAR process was sustained over time, they could "drop in and drop out depending on [their] own needs and wants, experiment and then come back to the group and then try something else…small drops. It wasn't all in one go" (Éamonn, FG3). In addition to presenting at the FEILTE conference, CTs engaged in and with research in other ways. Padraig and Mary engaged in the coding of data and literature related to data. Padraig reported that data analysis provided him with the opportunity to look back and that it validated for him how useful and engaging the process was: "Looking through conversations…you'd stop and laugh at some of it because you could see everyone was enjoying getting the space to talk about our different issues" (FG3). Padraig imparted that data analysis gave him an appetite to engage further: "I would like to…possibly be involved in presenting at future conferences"

[36] Éamonn assisted them in their preparation also but could not attend.

(FG2). Throughout the study, Oisín was completing a postgraduate degree. He agreed that engaging in and with the PALAR M-CoP "impacted on [his research]" (FG2). [redacted]

Due to the parallels, Oisín requested some further reading on CoPs and on the barriers to engaging in a CoP, which enhanced his understanding of the PALAR M-CoP research. Those who had engaged less in the research element due to time constraints, reported that they saw the value in it: "I can see why Oisín's doing that. I can see how that would be really great for him and for anyone else whose gotten involved in the research or presenting and things like that" (Sean, FG2). At least one CT considered using the PALAR strategy with their pupils for the purpose of overcoming engagement challenges; for example, Aoife reflected on the "idea of PAR to engage the defiant non-participant" in PE (RJ). The second and third themes of the chapter report further on how PALAR processes were used to identify, alleviate and overcome complex barriers to mentor growth and change. It is not uncommon for research to report enhanced practice as an outcome of CPDL engagement. In addition to reporting on the 'what' of the CPDL model, this chapter will also report on the 'how' and 'why'. CTs in this study explained that the PALAR M-CoP led to mentor growth because it allowed them to experience multiple transformative CPDL characteristics.

### 4.2.3 *The 'How' and 'Why' of Transformative CPDL Characteristics*

The PALAR M-CoP model was accepted as a transformative CPDL model because it developed multiple transformative CPDL characteristics, which CTs believed supported their growth within and beyond the community space. They identified that the PALAR M-CoP was: i) collaborative; ii) reflective; iii) situated and experiential; iv) sustained and iterative; v)

participant driven and personalized. How these characteristics and PALAR processes contributed to CTs becoming empowered and more critically conscious will be presented throughout the chapter. CTs compared their past CPDL with the PALAR M-CoP and agreed that "more [CPDL characteristics were apparent] in this" CPDL model (Padraig, FG3). Padraig stated: "I'm trying to think of any other CPD[L] that might have maybe 2 or 3 [characteristics] but I don't know if they'd have as much" as the PALAR M-CoP (FG3). With respect to effective CPDL characteristics, Éamonn communicated: "it's all very relevant to what we're talking about" (FG3). The following data are presented to describe 'how' the PALAR M-CoP supported mentor growth through the development of these characteristics[37].

i). Collaborative: CTs reported that PALAR M-CoP engagement involved high levels of social interaction and collaboration[38]. By the second workshop, Abigail asserted that in comparison with the previous CPDL, that this model "had far more emphasis on collaborative work with the COPET peer group, as well as with the mentee" (SR). As CTs evaluated the community's progress, they indicated that collaborative engagement had increased and improved, with 'professional dialogue as collaboration' regularly being mentioned. As the community dimension developed and PALAR processes prompted them to evaluate their evolving practice, CTs shared stories, hopes, fears, triumphs and barriers. Aoife asserted that "dialogue with peers is one of the greatest ways to learn about our practice" (Reflective Wall [RW]). She asserted that the collaborative discursive nature of the PALAR M-CoP was "pivotal to the successes of the" CPDL model. She added: "This was the 'flesh-and-blood' to the skeleton of the community" (RW). Community members appreciated "hearing others' perspective[s]" (Aoife,

[37] Whilst the dominant focus here is on mentor growth, it is acknowledged that those same CPDL characteristics also applied to the growth of the CTs as researchers.
[38] Due to the reflective nature of the work, much of the collaboration involved co-reflection and whilst explicit data regarding reflection are side-lined until the next section, it should be noted that collaboration and reflection when used together were complementary and reinforcing CPDL characteristics.

RW) and “what works for some and what doesn’t work” (Padraig, M-CoP3). They noted that the occurrence of professional dialogue about mentoring was more likely in the community space than it was in school, as they were surrounded by “people who are like minded”, all with a passion for the shared domain (Aoife, M-CoP-Q). Aoife shared that whilst at the workshops, if “an issue… crosses your mind…you happen to say it to the person beside [you] and you’ve got that opportunity [because] they’re there” (FG2).

Because of the situated nature of mentoring and SP, as well as the CPDL model’s opportunity to boundary span, CTs cited that they benefitted from collaborating with other SP partners. Having adopted a more democratic approach to mentoring, CTs explicitly target-set “to make the mentoring of a [PST] a collaborative process” (Ria, LJP). In addition to other mentor development activities reported previously by Sean, he planned to have the PST “redo [their] lesson plan having watched [an] analysis of [a] lesson and [having provided them with] feedback” (LJP). Aoife explicitly planned for her and her PST to collaboratively reflect by “keep[ing] a co-reflection journal” to record “what [they] learn[ed] from [their] mentoring conversations” (RJ). Ellen discussed her assessment practices with her PST and she reflected on the collaborative nature of the interaction: “In this discussion, we were developing into a team of teachers and progressing past [my PST] as a student and me as a mentor; a good progression at this stage of [their] placement” (RJ).

Aidan indicated that some of the more open PE-UTs from the partnership university were becoming more aware of what the CTs were developing and due to increased dialogue, they were engaging in triad learning conversation processes together more regularly. As promoted in the SP guidelines, Aoife reflected that “you can forge a good relationship with the supervisor and have a real meaningful conversation” (M-CoP1). Progress was made with respect to

streamlining of practice. Ria shared: “I have improved my collaboration with [the partnership university] and I feel my mentoring mirrors that of [the partnership university]. I felt I was more structured and linked into what [they] do” (M-CoP3). Working within a triad was found to be a mutually beneficial and rich opportunity: “I think that if you and the tutor are very much on a similar wavelength with regard to how a student can improve their practice, it can certainly help you, the student and…the tutor…I think for the three of us, it was a wonderful learning experience” (Aoife, FG2). Aoife communicated that this led to triad partners “all working together collaboratively” (FG2). She expressed that the triad was performing like “another mini-community of practice” (FG2).

As will be reported in this thesis more fully in a later section, CTs engaged in boundary spanning beyond the PALAR M-CoP. Some of them collaboratively participated with their PE colleagues, PE UTs and some even set specific targets “to try build [connections between PE [CTs and CTs in the] other subject…areas” (Padraig, LJP). Some achieved this and felt that they “extend[ed]…the community of practice to other [subject] departments” (Padraig, Artefact [A], M-CoP3). They were found to particularly value working more closely with the CT from the PST’s second subject (Oisín, FG2). Padraig’s aim was to “link the development of the student teacher with their 2nd subject to help observation in lessons” (LJP). Beyond this, there were incidences of CTs from both subjects joining forces to spread awareness of how they were co-developing the SP guidelines with the second subject UT: “we both met her when she came in to visit [X PST]...It was nice to hear [supportive comments] from the [second

subject's] side…that's the first time I heard that from the [second subject's] side and I have met the [second subject] people before" (Ellen, FG1).

Whilst CTs described presenting at the 'FEILTE Conference' as a "good experience", Ellen identified that the real triumph was "'collaborating' to present at FEILTE" (GA, M-CoP3). This collaborative experience led her to shift her focus from working with the PST, to her work with PALAR M-CoP members. She stated: "engaging in the [FEILTE] workshop focused me on the benefits of a CoP rather than just the benefits of mentoring" (SR).

Increased incidences of collaboration and conversation will not necessarily promote inclusion. The participatory approach of the PALAR M-CoP however, was found to impact positively upon social interactions. The dialogic focus made CTs feel as though they "were just contributing and talking about things" (Mary, FG2). With PALAR processes promoting democratic dialogue, CTs expressed that their opportunities to talk were "very equal" and that they felt a "comfort in being able to talk" openly (Mary, FG2). Data indicate that the pedagogical organisation of PALAR activities helped CTs to relate to one another, thus supporting the development of collaborative relationships. Padraig reported: "someone's not coming in going: 'I know all this. My school is perfect. We do this, this and this'" (FG3). Because activities and discussion prompted them to speak practically, they noted that "the environment that [they] were in felt safe…everyone was pretty sound and in a way it was easier to talk like that" (Padraig, FG3). Padraig identified the importance of this: "at that stage in the evening after a day's work [theory would] be a bit intense" (FG3), and this could limit participation for some. Moreover, CTs collectively opted for topics or issues to be identified in advance of the workshops. As such, they had the space to engage with the content ahead of time, and to figure out their own position prior to being influenced by the community: "you

might consciously be thinking about it that week because you were going to be doing something in this area" (Padraig, FG3). The findings indicate that PALAR approaches promoted meaningful collaboration for all members.

iii) Situated and Experiential Learning: CTs identified that their CPDL was situated and experiential. Éamonn amongst others, compared common CPDL provision to the PALAR M-CoP. He complained that other CPDL was not "really specific to [his] subject" (FG3). He recounted having experienced difficulty "mak[ing] it specific" (FG3). He added that "CPD[L] is only worthwhile or applicable if is it easily used" (SR). Padraig agreed with Éamonn. He attributed how relevant the PALAR M-CoP was, to the fact they could apply it to "the environment [they were] in" back at school (FG3).

Workshop activities and processes were cognitively situated upon their practice with PSTs. By unpicking past experiences, CTs considered how their history might affect their existing practices as a mentor with their current PST. Padraig developed a better understanding of "where the student is coming from now" (FG3). As such, he was more aware of how his perceptual lens needed to consider contextual factors other than those, which his personal situation naturally related to. He shared: "they are very young coming in to us and sometimes, like, I think back to what I was like as a teacher and a trainee and in my first and second year and the difference experience adds to that" (FG3).

During PALAR M-CoP workshops, CTs engaged in social exercises, which facilitated them to relate their CPDL to their situated experiences. Aoife reported that contextual storytelling was "what made the CoP become a living learning-in-context 'being' and gave meaning to all [their] activities" (RW). Sean added that whilst some CPDL opportunities allow for "chatting",

the PALAR M-CoP discourse was more applied, due to the fact that they were mentoring a PST back at their school: "yes, we do all the chatting but actually we discuss important matters, practical stuff that we are doing, hands-on stuff that we are doing. Not some theory box ticking" (FG2). It was suggested that the workshop activities prompted CTs to discuss actual on-the-job experiences rather than theories: "you can relate to experiences because you were probably gonna' encounter [it] and if you hadn't, you knew you were going" to (Padraig, FG3). Éamonn reported that "sitting around the table…troubleshooting" supported situated cognition because they returned to their schools thinking: "I'll try that next week…wanna' try that…I'll see where it might go" (FG3).

When CTs returned to their schools, they were presented with a real opportunity to apply their learning. Mary reported that "everyday there are different questions" and that "it makes you question [your practice] doesn't it?" (FG2). Aoife reflected upon how the application of learning develops organically as experiences unfold. "I looked at [X PST] doing his PE class, and I was struck by wondering what I would do" (RJ). On a daily basis, CTs were presented with situations which pushed them to compare their practice with their PSTs, in order to uncover their practical knowledge. Aoife had asked herself: "Why are the kids going ape for him and when I do it, they stop immediately. Why?" (FG2). Sean shared that in situations where he struggled to understand, he walked in their footsteps to prompt reflection: "The [lesson] delivery wasn't great but I didn't quite understand what to say to her to improve it. So, I did it myself and I realized it was quite difficult to do…I can't comment on it ha ha, unless I've tried it" (FG2).

According to the CTs, because the triad partnership was more collaborative, the UTs were provided with a richer contextual picture surrounding the PST's observed lesson. They

communicated that UTs were better positioned to situate their judgments of PSTs more realistic, as a result. Aoife described her experience: "[I] explain[ed] to her the context of the school" which "affected" how she "evaluat[ed] his performance" making it more "focused" (FG2). She reported that because of this transparency, the UT was aware of the parameters in which the PST was performing:

> "So, everyone knows what's going on. It's not just someone jetting in and saying: 'Oh, you never did this'. I might have said to my student: 'I don't want you to do that" (FG2).

iii) Reflective: In comparison with the previous CPDL experiences, CTs expressed that the CPDL model used in this study was "more focused on reflective practice" (Abigail, SR). Its centrality to the PALAR M-CoP's mission was expressed by Aoife: the community "was convened…to support members of the community to reflect on how they mentored PST's in their care" (SR), with "reflections [being] 'facilitated'" in workshops (RW). In particular, Niamh attributed "becom[ing] more reflective…to the community of practice" (FG1). Padraig highlighted that generative learning conversation approaches with their PSTs "support[ed] the student teacher and the cooperating teacher in engaging in reflective dialogue" (PGQ). As such, they developed "best practice for reflection" for both partners (GA, M-CoP3).

At community workshops, CTs were faced with "questions [they] hadn't thought of before" (Oisín, FG2). Aoife felt that "a strong part of the CPD[L] was the really good questions [which]…was structuring [their] thinking and encouraging [their] reflection" (FG2). She shared that it prompted revelatory responses: "'Oh God, I never thought of that'" (FG2). Both structured and unstructured conversations with PALAR M-CoP members assisted them to

recontextualise their thinking and to adjust their practice with mentees: "listening to other people talking about their problems with the student or their successes with the student has helped me reframe my thinking about my student and how I help him or her" (Aoife, FG2). As community members set targets to "become a better facilitator" of reflection (Oisín, FG2), they admitted to becoming more adept at deliberating over their mentoring practices: "I think this year I have become far more reflective on the whole mentoring process - the very skill I was trying to develop in my student!" (Ria, RJ).

Community members engaged increasingly in post-observation learning conversations with the UT and PST. Aoife particularly valued the multi-directional nature of the process: "This conversation included the student, me and her, and was reflective for all of us, with the two of us leading the reflection at various times" (SR). Some CTs appreciated the opportunity to reflect with colleagues in school also. Aidan and Padraig, who were teaching at the same school, had the opportunity to co-reflect on their evaluation of the PSTs' lessons:

> "Definitely having someone to talk to after [helps] and even think: 'okay, what did you think of that lesson with him?'" (Padraig, FG3).

Appreciation was also shared regarding being "able to reflect with" the CT from the second subject: "she's able to reflect on the [second subject's] side of things...I'm able to…on the PE side of things and we can, you know, work out a strategy together on how best to help the student" (Oisín, FG2). Ellen shared how their evaluations matched one another: "I spoke with

[X Teacher] today regarding [X PST]. It was interesting to note the similarities in what we were both saying to him" (RJ).

iv) Sustained and iterative: Padraig highlighted that unlike the 'one off' CPDL model, which the CTs were familiar with, the PALAR M-CoP was different, due to its sustained and iterative nature: "it's not a once off. We're coming back…I think you knew that you were going back…That was a major thing for me. It was continuous all the time" (FG3). He highlighted the ever evolving cyclical nature of the CPDL where there was follow-up: "it was good to come back in, reassess and go again, come back in, reassess and go again" (FG3). Continuity over time led to the CTs feeling more connected to the CPDL. As Aoife reported: "it was on [her] mind a lot more than [the] 4 times" that they had physically met (FG2).

CTs connected their growth to the CPDL model being more of a process than an event. Éamonn stated: "this is an ongoing process. I don't think it will have a finite date as it is important to keep evolving as a mentor" (LJP). Aidan agreed: "we can always be better" (PGQ). When identifying the timeline for her targets, Abigail shared that "this will be an ongoing area for each lesson review we do" (LJP). Additionally, because CTs continued to mentor different PSTs over many placements, they carried their practical targets forward: "Next time, I need to look at this more with my next student…and supporting self[-reflection] to avoid problems" (Aoife, RJ).

Aoife recalled a discussion she had with a community member, referring to it as a "significant conversation". She stated: "whatever we concluded, we went off" and attempted to act on the conclusions drawn. They then came back together at the next workshop and "did agreed that it certainly helped" (FG2). Aidan attributed his progress to the fact that he could continuously

apply his CPDL. He shared that his "mentoring skills [were] improving" due to having the opportunity to focus on "more practice" (SR). Therefore, the PALAR M-CoP afforded members sufficient time between workshops to apply their learning before returning to co-evaluate progress. They highlighted that repeated opportunities over time to come together, helped them to "see the benefits of it and…hear the benefits of it" (Aidan, FG1).

As expressed previously, having time to get to know the UT was constructive: "I know the supervising tutor from other visits...so I know this particular person" (Aoife, FG2). As the CT and UT developed a professional relationship, they were more inclined to make the effort to understand one another's practice. Aoife reported that she and the UT discussed their "morals…values and the meaning of PE" (FG2). It also gave CTs the opportunity over time "to explain to [the UT] the context of the school", which as suggested previously, enhanced the triad process (Aoife, FG2).

CTs were clear that time was necessary for change to occur. As is reported more fully later in this chapter, CTs communicated that they needed to engage in the CPDL model for a sustained period of time before they could attempt to influence less engaged colleagues. They also communicated that to achieve this they needed to alter their position and status within their schools. Though this would give them more power to be influential, it would take time.

v) <u>Personalised and Participant Driven:</u> CTs reported that the PALAR M-CoP "was a different avenue for [them] to go down" (Éamonn, FG3). Ellen added that this CPDL afforded her the opportunity to focus on her needs: "My reasons for engaging…some are more selfish than they

were; less focused on the school or my pupils, more on me, which in turn will have an affect on the pupils" (SR).

CTs complained about not having a free choice of CPDL options typically. Padraig explained: "a leaflet would come in the door and the principal would go: 'I need four people to go to this'" (FG3). With respect to whole school CPDL, Éamonn reported that "generally it's not really specific to your subject. It's an overall general thing and you can't pick and choose and so forth and it doesn't really tailor towards you" (FG3). CTs spoke highly of being permitted to choose what CPDL they wished to engage in and with, and they claimed that self-selection was a strength of the CPDL model. Éamonn insisted that "like anything you volunteer to subscribe to, you're gonna appreciate it that bit more" (FG3).

With regards to the content of self-selected CPDL, Padraig stated that typically teachers were "not asked for an input" into what they would like to learn or how they would like to learn (FG3). It was perceived that when CPDL facilitators had requested their input, there was still "a particular structure that they had in mind" (Padraig, FG3) and that asking them to contribute was no more than a "box ticking" exercise (FG2). As expressed by Aoife, CTs appreciated that the PALAR M-CoP was driven by them and for them: "It was our voices that were expressed and our voices that were listened to and [we listened] to each other" also (FG2). With respect to the choice of content at PALAR M-CoP workshops, Padraig referred to the use of 'Doodle' software to 'schedule an event' and 'make a choice' about what they would like to develop or learn about. The content and activities were planned based on "what [they] would want to do" and the facilitator "would mix and match what [they] wanted to do with [the community's] aspirations" (FG3). Whilst "there was a mission or an objective" for the workshops (Éamonn,

FG3), because CTs set the agenda, they "were centred at it. [The facilitator was] feeding off [them with regards] to where to go with it" (Padraig, FG3).

According to CTs, the CPDL model in this study was very personalised. They reported: "what is great about this, is, the community of practice was about our needs" (Aoife, FG2) and it is "tailor[ed] around our needs" (Ria, M-CoP3). The CPDL did not centre around "someone else's needs…it wasn't somebody there…box ticking" (Aoife, FG2). This led to it being highly personalised for CTs initially: "Yeah we're all very much me oriented and me centred. Probably we were selfish being involved for us for our little Kingdoms" (Éamonn, FG3). As CTs target set, they considered "short, medium and long term…targets", which were specific to their contexts and stages of development (Padraig, FG3). A self-mastery approach to development and progress tracking was adopted. Padraig recalled that there was "reflection on achievements, what's achieved, what's not, what's the next step. So, there was a layout plan" (FG3). As CTs shared their 'triumphs', they then selected a size of marble to indicate how triumphantly they felt personally. As Sean said: "My choice! My choice! Ha ha!" (M-CoP3). By discussing their practice with the community, they were receiving feedback on their developing practice as mentors: "it was reaffirming stuff that [they were] doing well" (Éamonn, FG3). Aidan's and Padraig's practice of co-reflection supported personalised feedback: "maybe our assessment was…good. Kind of spot on" (Padraig, FG3). They also reportedly appreciated the feedback they received through conducting learning conversations, as shared by Padraig: "it's good to get feedback" from the UT (FG3). Aoife expressed that being provided with the UT's feedback, she could evaluate her progress as a facilitator of critical reflection: "I saw the written thing that his tutor gave him and I was so proud" because the UT had little to add to his self-reflection of his observed lesson (FG2). This outcome reassured Aoife that she was making "progress" in her role as mentor (FG2). The drive to present and

celebrate their work at the FEILTE Conference afforded CTs the opportunity to receive "good feedback" from a wider array of educational professionals (Ellen, M-CoP3).

With respect to participation in research processes, the data acknowledges that CTs' sense of autonomy was vitally important. CTs reported that it was appropriate that the community's initial focus was predominantly targeted at their CPDL as mentors. Padraig communicated that the research emphasis needed to take second place at the start of the study. "That's a natural thing!...we have to buy into it. If [you] don't think there is anything in it for you, then you won't [engage]" (FG3). Éamonn reflected on the importance of this balancing act: "if you'd launched it from the start, you wouldn't have had half as [much interest]…we would have turned off" (FG3). CTs discussed the fact that even if PALAR processes were pointed out and rationalised at the early stages of the study, they would have found it to be too "theory heavy" and would have questioned "how relevant…it [was] to the actual outcome[s]" of the workshops (Mary, FG2). Padraig added: "Yeah you might have lost us" (FG3).

Éamonn noted the importance of initially providing the CTs "with ownership over it…without [them] being fully aware of it" and as a result, they still "felt [they] were contributing towards it" research processes (FG3). This permitted the lead researcher to engage the CTs with PALAR implicitly, until such a time, that it could be made explicit retrospectively. Padraig agreed that they should be facilitated to see their progress themselves, as opposed to being told what the expectations might be. After querying whether the facilitator expected participation to grow and expand as it did, they acknowledged that if the facilitator had suggested broader outcomes, "even then [they'd] be having an influence on it. You don't want that" (Padraig, FG3). For Padraig, the retrospective awareness of the implicit becoming explicit was reached through engaging in data analysis activities: "when you read back on it and you can see the

steps and you didn't realize it at the time" (FG3). Mary insisted: "I definitely think we have achieved the blurring [between research and CPDL]…It has definitely. Definitely learning!" (FG2). Sean indicated that the study successfully fulfilled the dual purpose: "I don't think anyone thinks this is complete just data collection…I don't think it comes in to it" (FG2).

Initially, with respect to research participation, more than one community member referred to the research being "your research", *your,* meaning the lead researcher's. This indicated where the balance of perceived research participation lay at the early stages of the PALAR strategy (Aoife, Sean, FG2). However, CTs appeared to be satisfied with this split at that point in time. For example, it was felt that that "someone has to lead it" (Sean, FG2), "somebody has to gather the questions, collate them, establish the top two and come back and bring them back to us. There is somebody who has to be doing those things" (Aoife, FG2).

As this thematic discussion presented, the PALAR M-CoP acted as a transformative CPDL vehicle for teachers' growth, as both developing mentors and indeed researchers. However, the data indicates that whilst the mentoring learning content was highly valued, their growth would not have been possible were it not for 'how' the CPDL model was facilitated through a combined approach of transformative PALAR processes and CPDL characteristics.

### *4.3 Complex Barriers to Mentor Growth and CPDL Implementation*

The data presented in this section go some way to answering the following research questions in Table 15.

Table 15 Thematic Research Questions: Complex Barriers

| Main Research Question |
| --- |
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support the identification of complex barriers to growth and CPDL implementation; and if so, what are these barriers; who poses them and how do they impact CTs' growth and CPDL implementation? |

In addition to considering their progress through PALAR processes, CTs also cyclically engaged in problem identification processes. These processes prompted them to explicitly identify numerous interconnected complex barriers, which hampered their attempts to fully embed their CPDL at school, ultimately stifling their growth, particularly as mentors. The data presented in this section explain how barriers made it challenging for CTs to apply their learning back at their schools and, to cascade their learning to colleagues within and beyond their subject departments. They identified that various SP partners posed challenges, including: PSTs; other CTs within and beyond the PE department; principals and school management; UTs and teacher unions. Analysis of the data revealed that these barriers were: cultural, structural, and relational. In particular, relational barriers were prompted by partners' lack of value for, interest in and motivation to engage in mentoring and SP processes. Additionally,

CTs' perceived low status, position and power within the hierarchical complex system presented challenges.

### 4.3.1 *Cultural Barriers*

According to the CTs, an inhospitable culture acted as a complex barrier to mentor growth and to the development of a mentoring and SP culture. Aoife referred to the "culture of the school" in Ireland as displaying a "culture of independence unparalleled anywhere" else (M-CoP 4). She perceived that the "terrible autonomy", which the system has been known to suffer from historically, leads to teachers being "unwilling to share" with one another (M-CoP2). Abigail reported that collaboration is typically uncommon due to a "fear of competition" where "everyone wants one up" (M-CoP Q). It was suggested that this created a sense of professional "isolation" (GA, M-CoP2), which according to Aoife, has the potential to "kill your professionalism" (M-CoP1).

Additionally, CTs attributed their initial discomfort with and other CTs' lack of engagement with mentoring and SP to a "fear of being evaluated", particularly by the PST and UT (A, M-CoP2). Aidan shared what he felt was a stumbling block to providing constructive feedback: "if it is a negative experience, the strongest of wills is required to honestly appraise…something which most of us are not able to achieve" (PGQ). According to CTs, anxiety surrounding many of the critically reflective processes, which mentoring and SP involves e.g. observation, evaluation, feedback provision, to name a few, was inflamed by an increased sense of legislative regulation brought about by the 'Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers' (Teaching Council, 2012). They reported that other "teachers [were] afraid of it going from evaluation to appraisal [where] you can be struck off the register" (M-CoP 4). They

perceived that these issues further stifled the potential development of a collaborative and inquiring culture, which is required for effective mentoring and SP provision.

### 4.3.2 *Structural Barriers*

According to CTs, "time is [a] huge" structural barrier (Aoife, FG2). In agreement with her peers, Abigail complained that: "there just aren't enough hours in the day" (RJ). As expressed by the CTs, it was difficult to prioritise mentoring and SP, due to there being so "much going on in the school", which left "little time to fully engage as a [CT]" (Sean, M-CoP Q). Some particularly expressed resentment about the fact that the CPDL time spent at the PALAR M-CoP was not identified as "a Croke Park workshop hour" by principals (Aoife, FG2). Aligning with their complaints above about traditional CPDL, CTs expressed frustration because they perceived that the whole-school CPDL events, which they were offered, and often mandated to participate in, were "not going to impact on" them as much as the PALAR M-CoP was (Éamonn, FG3).

Caroline reported to feeling frustrated by the lack of structural support provided by the principal for those whom they allocated a PST . She reportedly asked the principal: "'So, where is the training, you know if you're expecting staff to do it…even if there isn't any nationally, surely you could provide some and we could do it in the school?'" (M-CoP3). Unfortunately, Caroline's principal's response was commonly experienced by members of the community: "'Oh there isn't [any training]…Oh, no Croke Park hours left!'" (M-CoP3). There was the suggestion that principals allocated a PST to a busy or senior teacher, as it would "give him time off" (Caroline, M-CoP 3). At the same time, Ellen shared that her principal justified giving

her extra work on the grounds that she was "down two periods because [she was timetabled with] a [PST]" (FG1).

### 4.3.3 *Relational Barriers*

CTs reported that their capacity to embed their CPDL and thus their growth as a mentor, was impacted essentially by two relational issues. Firstly, they reportedly experienced that their CPDL was challenging to embed in cases where other SP partners had little interest in, value for and motivation to engage in mentoring and SP and where there was a conflict of interest, values and motivations between them and other SP partners. Secondly, CTs identified that having a perceived low status in their schools placed them in a weak position to apply and cascade their CPDL to their colleagues. They suggested that this issue was exacerbated by the perceived low subject status of PE.

CTs' comments highlight the complex relationship between cultural, structural and relational barriers. Aidan stated: "If it's the done thing, it helps the whole process manoeuvre. If it's not the done thing and you become the person on the outside of it, the whole school culture makes it hard for you to keep doing it. After a while, you burn" (M-CoP 4). Community members identified the following SP partners who hindered their capacity to grow: other CTs; principals and school management; UTs; PSTs; and teacher unions[39].

i) <u>Other CTs and colleagues:</u> Mary reported that "other co-operating teacher[s were] disinterested" in mentoring (M-CoP 4). It was shared that "the majority of teachers would not

[39] Whilst unions might not be considered SP partners per say, they were heavily involved in the consultation which led to the Guidelines on SP and influenced teachers' views about SP processes.

want to put in the time and effort" (Ellen, FG1). Niamh indicated that "the perception is [still] there: 'oh I've a student teacher. Oh I get free time off'…'Last class on a Friday! I'm gone [home]!'" (M-CoP3). Aoife found this to be particularly the case with CTs from other non-practical subjects: "Some of my school colleagues…are not present to support their PST mentees (their physical presence is not required for insurance purposes as it would [be] for us practical teachers)" (RW). Niamh expressed frustration and defended her efforts, asserting: "I am constantly saying: 'you don't get time off because you help them'" (FG1). They recognised that the development of "collective learning relationships relies on others to engage" and that the other CTs should "allow [it] to happen" (Ria, RJ). Ria reported a "lack of support" for her engagement (M-CoP Q). At the start of the study, CTs shared that typically: "there's no interaction from the [second subject's] side" (Ellen, M-CoP1). Aidan reported that when the PSTs' other CT fails to engage, it makes the role of the CT very difficult: when "a [PST] is lookin' at you going: 'I'm not getting any grief off the [second subject] teacher. You're making me sit here and [saying] 'give me lesson plans and show me things'" (FG1). When Ellen initially attempted to engage colleagues, she reported to feeling "surprised by a few people that said: 'don't send them [into my lesson]'" (FG1). They expressed frustration over poor SP attitudes, which they felt were determined by union positions: "the union people can kind of look at you and go: 'what is she doing all this extra work [for]' and they can kinda' frown on you" (Ellen, FG1).

Padraig reported that "the attitude to PE in Ireland" was very poor (FG3). He added that staff would be "having a laugh and joke" about it and would say "you're only wearing a tracksuit, so how am I supposed to take you seriously" (FG3). As such, CTs reported to feeling that they might have less sway when attempting to cascade mentoring practices, because colleagues would think: "it's only PE" (Éamonn, FG3). CTs' sense of reliance and feelings of vulnerability

are expressed in the following comment: “no matter what the department of education put in [or] the Teaching Council or whatever [do]… if they don’t engage, it doesn’t work” (Aidan, FG1). During workshop one, Ellen shared a fear that the second subject CT was becoming frustrated by the number of PSTs they were facilitating from various partnership universities. Ellen communicated that her colleague was feeling disenfranchised from the partnership university in this study because they did not offer an equivalent CPDL model for CTs for her subject. She stated:

> “The difference in the mentoring programme between the PE side and the [second subject] side (lack of)…can lead to the [second subject cooperating] teachers possibly not wanting to accept students which has a knock-on effect on the PE” (M-CoP-Q).

Ellen expressed a sense of powerlessness about the second subject CT potentially refusing to accept the allocation of a PST: “If the [second subject] teachers object to it and aren’t happy with it, then I’m not going to be able to have a student in next year. They have to be on board as well as us” (M-CoP1). Despite CTs’ frustration with other CTs, they initially did not feel as though they had the power to influence them, as expressed by Caroline: “it’s very hard as a colleague to start telling your colleagues what to do” (M-CoP3). In Mary’s school there was a working group focused on mentoring. Though she attempted to engage with the group, Mary claimed that issues of hierarchy blocked her from joining them. As “a [relatively] new person” on the staff, she felt that colleagues thought: “you’re just in the door” and “you haven’t done your

16 years in this school" (FG2). Her exclusion from the working group was perceived by Aoife as "smack[ing] of: 'know your place'" (FG2).

ii) Principals and school management: Though the SP guidelines highlight that it should be led by school management, CTs reported that principals "don't get involved in the process" (Aidan, M-CoP4) and "some couldn't give a curse" (Aoife, FG2). They communicated that in some cases, this was due to a lack of awareness of the benefits of engagement. Caroline stated: "management haven't come around to that realization yet. They just think it's box ticking" (M-CoP3). It was communicated that their "buy in…[was]…need[ed]…as well" (Niamh, FG1) and that they need to "recognise the value of it" (Ellen, FG1). CTs perceived that the lack of support offered and the apparent lack of value demonstrated by principals contributed to and reinforced colleagues' attitude to SP and mentoring. Some principals were initially reluctant to acknowledge and structurally support engagement with SP in a meaningfully way, because they did not trust staff not to take advantage. Some CTs perceived this to be the reason why principals refused to recognise their PALAR M-CoP engagement as one of the discretionary 'Croke Park' activities. Niamh reported that her principal stated: "'half the teachers wouldn't do it'" (FG1).

According to CTs, principals also contributed to feelings of powerlessness. Ellen reported: if "the principal says: 'no you're not getting any student teachers', then you're not doing it" (FG1). Throughout the study there were two CTs whose engagement in and with the PALAR M-CoP was interrupted because the principal decided not to accept a PST for SP. Abigail identified this as a "big barrier" (M-CoP3). Éamonn stated: "If this decision is solely up to me then I would definitely be interested in taking students on board" (A). However, he later

confirmed that his "fear…was unfortunately realised!!!", as his principal refused to accept a PST (A).

As reported, CTs were frustrated by school management agreeing to accommodate a PST, but then failing to promote CTs' engagement with the new guidelines from the Teaching Council. According to Caroline, her principal said to staff: "'Look it's coming in…everyone has to do it and that's it!'" (M-CoP3). Abigail warned that such a hierarchical top-down approach, whereby "staff have no choice [and] it has to be done" would result in mentoring being "brought in very begrudgingly, like everything else" (M-CoP3). She reported to feeling worried that such an approach would lead to "a ticking the box [exercise] as opposed to [developing] an effective learning environment" (M-CoP3). She indicated that this would undermine the potential of mentoring and SP in the minds of staff (M-CoP3). They also indicated that attempts to influence colleagues to engage was undermined by their principals' dismissal of their attempts to raise the profile of mentoring and SP. CTs' attempts to lobby the principal and management, were unsuccessful initially, as reported by Mary: "I did mention it but they were blasé and not interested…and didn't take it on board, so I didn't really mention it after that" (M-CoP4). This reinforced CTs' awareness of their position as 'staff' and as such, their sense of powerlessness. As Caroline reported: "staff have only so much power. You'll get some of them [them being other CTs] on board" but she insisted that it was fruitless unless they got "management [to] take it on board" (M-CoP3).

iii) <u>UTs:</u> CTs reported that some UTs, particularly non-PE UTs initially posed a barrier to their participation and therefore, growth.[40] Aoife reported that, on one occasion, she requested to

[40] It is important to highlight that unlike the PE UTs who were engaged in similar CPDL processes as the CTs, the non-PE UTs were not.

attend and observe the PST's assessment lesson. According to Aoife, the non PE-UT expressed that her presence was not required: "he said: 'don't worry. I'm not assessing you'. He said to *me*. I just smiled and left. What a git. Who did he think he was!" (M-CoP4). Aoife referred to the "3 legged stool" not always allowing for a "three way conversation" (M-CoP4). Whilst she described each PALAR M-CoP member as a "teacher educator" and a "knowledge creator…on the ground in the trench", she perceived that in some cases, "The Academy" did not "respect what they [had] to say" and did not "respect [their] knowledge" (M-CoP 4). She reported that "the arrogance of some [non-PE] supervising tutors...has to be seen to be believed" (FG2). Éamonn explained that the reason for his principal refusing to accommodate a PST related to the behaviour of a non-PE UT. According to Éamonn, the UT criticized the principal's management of the PST's SP experience, forgetting that their accommodation of a PST was voluntary and perceived to be an act of goodwill.

`iv) PSTs: Abigail shared a common fear amongst community members: a "fear [of] the [PST] not engaging", most often because they think "that they know better" (M-CoP 3). Niamh stated that her PST had "become offensive" when their practice was questioned. Whilst she was "surprised at the [PST's] attitude", she shared that broaching this would be perceived as "undermining" (RJ). Abigail reported that PSTs tended to demonstrate an "unwillingness…to take feedback on board until after [their] supervisor's visit" (M-CoP Q). It was perceived that when UTs were somewhat dismissive of the CT, this undermined the maintenance of a productive dyad relationship. They perceived that, given the power of the UT as an assessor, the PST tended to pay less heed to the CTs' guidance, which frustrated them significantly. This was particularly evident when there was a mismatch between the CT's and UT's feedback, with the PST arguing: "'my [UTs] are passing me but you're telling me its not good enough'".

Aidan added that how engaged the PST was in the process also "depend[ed] on who [they] ha[d as a UT]" (M-CoP 2).

Some CTs were conscious that, even if their value for mentoring and SP was matched by the principal's, their continued growth was still at the mercy of the PST, who might not select their school. Éamonn shared: "because of where the school is located, mentees might not select [my school] as an option and then this process becomes a futile exercise. Although I would have learned and developed new skills and strategies, I might not be able to utilise them" (RW). CTs also complained that their opportunity to apply their CPDL was highly dependent upon the PST's willingness to engage in the process. Abigail indicated that: "the [PST] has to be willing [and] to be open minded" (M-CoP3). She added that when a PST fails to engage "there's just this wall that can often lead to more fractious relationships within that relationship than there should be. Then that's hard" (M-CoP3). Sean reported how powerless he felt when his PST failed to engage: "I was absolutely drained…I used everything, every idea in my head…I sat down with my department and said: "what the hell was that?...I was close to ringing [the SP PE coordinator] and saying: 'I'm out. I can't do this anymore'" (M-CoP3).

v) <u>Teacher Unions:</u> It was asserted that unions "don't have an awareness of the place of it" (Ellen, FG1) "or the value of it" (Niamh, FG1). Niamh reported that her union representatives did not "understand exactly what [they do]" and according to her, he was "anti [SP]" (FG1). She indicated that pressure not to engage was worse "if you are a unionized school" (FG1). There was a strong opinion amongst the PALAR M-CoP that teacher unions had a tendency to "circle the wagons" (Aidan, FG1) and "[throw] the baby [out with] the bathwater" (Ellen, FG1). CTs reported that they, and their colleagues, were aware that the teacher unions could "turn around tomorrow" and "say: work to rule", imposing a "blanket ban" on all non-teaching

activities (Ellen, FG1). CTs worried that this would put their CPDL engagement and mentor growth in jeopardy (Ellen, FG1). It was agreed that the unions would not tend to "stop…individual teachers in their little role…but in the bigger role where…they want to bring this to [colleagues]" (Aidan, FG1), "then they'd be stopped" (Niamh, FG1). Such dominance further dampened CTs' desire to cascade their CPDL to others. As will be reported, Ellen sought the permission of her principal to take on the additional unpaid responsibility of coordinating SP for CTs and PSTs across the school. She insisted that this was only permitted because it was not "breaking union rules because it wasn't a post in the first place. If it had been a post, then [she] wouldn't have been able to do this…the union would be standing against [her] on that" (FG1).

Typically, when CPDL models are judged as being non-transformative, they are criticised for failing to use and develop transformative CPDL characteristics. The data presented above indicates, that even when teachers are highly satisfied with the quality of the CPDL experience, significant complex barriers still impact their capacity to apply their CPDL and grow, and block their ability to cascade it to their colleagues. Due to the PALAR processes in this study, CTs were increasingly highly aware of and frustrated by the presentation of these barriers.

### *4.4 Overcoming Barriers to Mentor Growth and CPDL Implementation*

The data presented in this section go some way to answering the following research questions in Table 16.

Table 16 Thematic Research Questions: Overcoming Complex Barriers

| Main Research Question |
| --- |
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support CTs to alleviate complex barriers to mentor growth and CPDL implementation; and empower them to overcome such barriers and if so, how? |

Despite a raised awareness and experience of growth and implementation barriers, the CTs believed that engagement in the PALAR M-CoP supported change. As Aidan shared: "the rewards are massive. We can see the rewards for that culture change" (M-CoP3). The transformative potential of the model was affirmed by the Times Education Supplement (2014) including a piece about the PALAR M-CoP's contribution to the FEILTE Conference. In this piece, they celebrated the work of the community by quoting Aoife: "The development of communities like this can offer practical and workable solutions in overcoming the challenges of teacher education. The Teaching Council ought to take note of this" (TES, 2014).

In each PALAR M-CoP workshop, space was structured for CTs to support one another to explore ways of overcoming their fears and complex barriers. CTs identified that transformative CPDL characteristics were helpful for alleviating many complex barriers.

However, dialogic approaches also led to the co-construction of strategies, which enabled CTs to address and challenges power asymmetries. Strategies for change related to social conflict, as well as socio-political issues of status, position and power.

### 4.4.1 *Alleviating Cultural Barriers*

The data indicate that the CPDL model's interplay of multiple transformative CPDL characteristics contributed to the alleviation of some cultural barriers, which they experienced in school. CTs reported that they enjoyed the increased and improved opportunities for social interaction and collaboration, within and beyond the PALAR M-CoP. As reported, in addition to the community members, the learning network increased and widened to include PSTs, UTs, CTs within and beyond their subject department. Generative mentoring helped to alleviate professional isolation, as expressed by Padraig: "[it added] a 3rd person into our 'sacred' PE Dept" (RJ). Such an addition was reported to be particularly powerful for one-teacher PE departments: "I have been teaching [many] years and I have been on my own every single one of those years. I've never had a mentor. I've never had another key professional to talk to…the isolation is…It's not just loneliness…it kills you…So, there's great relief out of it" (Aoife, M-CoP1). Ellen's comment reflects the importance of having iterative and sustained opportunities to engage with a community of teachers: "I am the only qualified PE teacher in my school. So, me coming into the community of practice is me chatting with other PE teachers as well" (FG1). Alleviated feelings of isolation and how it linked with mentor growth was particularly valued by Éamonn, whose school was geographically more remote than the other community members: "[Being] stuck in the back arse of nowhere [and] being a lone wolf…I was paddling my own canoe and then coming here and learning from the experience of other people…which was a big thing for me because like, I possibly had no-one to discuss it with" (FG3). CTs

suggested that were it not for the validation and support of other community members, their motivation to persist in the face of barriers would have lapsed. Aidan asserted: "I can honestly say that if it wasn't for the people who are here and yourself putting in the effort, sur' I wouldn't be here this evening…I just wouldn't" (FG1). Despite the poor culture of mentoring which appeared to prevail, Ellen added that engaging with community members reassured them that they are not alone in their journey: "If you're not part of this and you're not talking, then you're not going [to engage]…'am I the only eegit doing this like?'" (FG1). Aidan's statement indicates that there is a strong relationship between engagement in a PALAR M-CoP and CTs' commitment to upholding high standards of mentoring and SP cultures:

> "If we hadn't the support…we have great support of all of the people here…Otherwise, we could go to the other end of the spectrum and just go: 'here's my class'…Whereas, like, we see the benefits of it and we hear the benefits of it [from one another]" (FG1).

CTs also reported that because they were less inclined to be frustrated or down-heartened by the slow pace of change, which stifled the progress they were making against their targets. Aidan explained why: "I feel like I am behind. I'm like: Jesus…a year and a half ago I said: 'I'm gonna get this done' and then you come here and other teachers who are the exact same as us, who are proactive and they are still only doing

the same thing and you're like: 'It's not too bad. They're the same…because change happens slowly and we are so under pressure in schools" (FG1).

According to community members, their engagement in and with the PALAR M-CoP alleviated the fears they had surrounding the triad process[41]. For the most part, they reported that "the inspection process" was "more progressive" (Aidan, M-CoP3). Padraig stated that a willingness to engage in learning conversations felt like "more of a process…less aggressive" (Padraig, M-CoP3). Sean added that "it's just a lovely atmosphere…it takes that worry out of it. It's not a judgmental thing, it's listening and chatting" (FG2). According to Aoife, evaluation apprehension was also alleviated by the fact that the PE UT was linked to the school consistently over time, and as such, was familiar with the context[42]: "I know the supervising tutor from other visits…therefore that affected her when she was supervising the student and ahm, evaluating his performance, she can see" the context (FG2). She reported that this improved the teacher evaluation process: "the supervision wasn't just a broad visit from the University tutor…it gives them a richer discussion after the class" (FG2) and Ria reported that a co-constructivist process "gives the supervisor more rounded views" (M-CoP1). According to Aoife, this is necessary as "three visits or two visits don't give an idea of how the person's performing" (M-CoP1). Aoife indicated that this made the experience less stressful for both them and the PST: "I think the student was delighted [as] he wasn't being judged on…her own

[41] It is important to acknowledge that PE UTs at the partnership university were kept abreast of PALAR M-CoP activities and also engaged in some similar developmental activities, for example, conducting dyad and triad learning conversations. An example of such developmental activities can be found under appendix Q

[42] The partnership development rationale for this practice was agreed with PE UTs and where possible, was adhered to.

particular set of boxes that she had to tick [her being the UT]" (FG2). Increased triad interaction reinforced for CTs that their teacher evaluation practices were being effective:

> "I saw the written thing that his tutor gave him…She said to him that actually she had very little to say or very little to add to what he had drew up himself from his own class. He came up with it" (Aoife, FG2).

Aoife reported her joy at her PSTs' capacity to reflect and evaluate their lessons accurately: "I was jumping up and down, Yes! Woooh!...The sense of pride… I was so proud 'Yes!'…I was thrilled". She also felt validated by her feedback being consistent with the PE UT's: "She saw what I saw…I'm making…progress here" (FG2). Ria reported that she valued sitting in on the learning conversation between the PST and the UT who was new to the school.[43] Aoife stated that "[watching the UT give feedback]…was an incredible learning experience" (M-CoP3). However, the fact that Aoife's PE UT "was all ears" acted as confirmation that their learning conversation was providing valuable insight into the evaluated lesson (FG2). She added that the triad process led to them all being "on a similar wavelength" about expectations and that this communication of information "can certainly help [them], the student and the supervisor" (FG2). In addition, according to Padraig, discussions about lesson evaluations at workshops helped them to see that they were "on the right lines" (FG3). As he and Aidan discussed their PSTs' lesson observations they received validation: "we can kind of find common ground" (FG3). Some CTs set targets to prompt the PST to engage more in the critical reflection and evaluation of teaching. Aoife made it clear to her PST that teacher evaluation "would be two-way and as much as he expected to be observed and [have] a discussion about the class, [she]

[43] It should be noted that PE UTs at the partnership university were encouraged to lead on the first triad learning conversation and to adhere to the learning conversations guide with the intention of handing over leadership at the next visit.

expected him to reciprocate [with] his observations of [her] class" (RJ). Éamonn planned to model an openness to critical reflection and evaluation, sharing: "I asked my student to analyse me debriefing…I got him to sit in my shoes. I think this was a very worthwhile exercise…It focused my mind" (RJ). Sean set a target to "use video analysis of [a] lesson matched with video analysis on [the] feedback conversation and allow[ing] the mentee to comment on [the] whole process" (LJP). Such practices appeared to challenge the cultures of the 'terrible autonomy' within teacher education, which seemed to persist as an issue.

From CTs' perspectives, their increased confidence made them more open to peer evaluation within their schools and, to varying degrees, more confident to lead on this. Aoife suggested that she became more "willing and able to do this…will be done next term. The reflective conversation and peer mentoring that will be needed are already in use with myself and my student" (SR). Padraig reported to feeling "ahead of the curve" with respect to critical reflection and "peer evaluation in school" (FG3). Oisín reported that he felt confident enough to encourage colleagues to engage: "I'd love to bring that to our staff" (M-CoP2). However, with regards to cultures surrounding critical reflection and teacher evaluation process, which are important for SP provision, it was maintained that "fear of change is a massive thing" (Aidan, FG1).

In addition to the secondary impact which their engagement had upon prevailing cultures, CTs actively set targets to overcome more complex barriers. Aidan used targets to "try to" entice colleagues to engage. He believed that "once they open up and see…once people go in and see it's not" so bad, "people will like [be more willing]" (FG1). The PALAR M-CoP's work was perceived to offer "a stepping stone" for cultural change (Niamh, FG1) with "group [members] definitely kick[ing] off something in [their] school" (Padraig, FG3). Their efforts to engage

colleagues resulted in "people…trying to do the [mentoring] practices" more frequently (Aidan, FG1). Niamh explained how, as the study proceeded she became more confident at asking for deeper engagement from her PE colleagues':

> "This year I said to her: 'If you want to have them, you've got to [engage]" (Niamh)
>
> "And what did she say?" (Caroline)
>
> "She said: 'Yeah. No problem'" (Niamh) (M-CoP3)

Niamh also reported that she "tried bringing in the [second subject] teachers" (M-CoP3). She added that she had been successful: "he said: 'no problem. I'll sit in anyway and give her a few [notes]'" (M-CoP3). In her case, the PALAR M-CoP's work had also resulted in a "little bit of peer [evaluation]…starting" in her school (FG1). She assisted a colleague who was conducting a post graduate study on the topic of peer evaluation. She shared that her engagement in the PALAR M-CoP helped him: "It supports him yeah" (FG1). She expanded that: "[he] took a few of the evaluation sheets that we [use] and he made up his own peer assessment sheets…and he read all the stuff we got from the community of practice as well…and that was helpful" (FG1). Niamh reported that, out of her colleague's participant sample, of which "he had 8….3 of them [we]re PE and the girl from the [second] subject". From Niamh's perspective, without the PALAR M-CoP's impact on her school, culture "[would] have been a barrier" for his study (FG1). In Padraig's school, "peer evaluation between other subjects…[was]...actually starting" (FG3).

### 4.4.2 *Alleviating Structural Barriers*

The data indicated that if teachers consider their CPDL engagement to be transformative, they will persist even when structural barriers are presented or cannot be

alleviated. Though challenges associated with time continued to be problematic, CTs were "more than happy to give up their free time" (Éamonn, FG3). Éamonn shared that because they were "really engaged in the process" they would "find the time from somewhere" (FG3). CTs worked hard to build mentoring time into their week more formally. Éamonn shared that they had "establish[ed] formalised meeting times from the 1st week" with their PST (LJP). However, he also set the target that "if something clashes with this time [he would] have a back-up time organised within 24 hours to allow feedback [to] be given to the mentee" (LJP). Ria shared that she had "introduce[d] the idea of allocating time in departmental meetings to discuss [their] student teacher" (LJP).

CTs set targets to overcome issues of time by approaching those who determined the structures. For example, Sean arranged to "meet with school management to negotiate a time slot" for meetings with their PSTs (LJP). Padraig shared that due to the work they were doing on mentoring and SP within their school, that their principal and senior management began to trust staff more. On account of this, Aidan felt comfortable to make requests regarding the flexibility of working conditions. Padraig shared that previously, "meetings [had to be] at certain times…all departments meet now" (FG3). However, they negotiated that departments be permitted to schedule meetings based on when it was "more convenient for" them (Padraig, FG3). Padraig added: "if we have a free period we meet and have our meeting and that would mean we are not staying back that extra couple of hours" (FG3). Padraig and Aidan agreed that management's trust to organize their own time was fostered on the back of the mentoring and SP work they were doing within the school. Some CTs agreed that they had developed the

confidence to approach their principal with the intention of convincing them to recognise the time they spent on their mentoring CPDL as legitimate 'Croke Park Hour' time (Niamh, FG1).

### 4.4.3 *Alleviating Relational Barriers*

To varying degrees and at different rates, CTs reported that their engagement with the PALAR M-CoP contributed to them overcoming relational barriers. The data indicate that the change in cultures and structures positively impacted relationships with SP partners and vice versa. CTs perceived that their CPDL supported them to influence SP partners, who then developed a greater value for, interest in and motivation to engage more meaningfully. Progress also occurred because SP partners became more aware of the CTs' engagement with the CPDL model, and in other cases, because the CPDL processes enabled them to more overtly enact change.

v) <u>Other CTs:</u> CTs indicated that due to their sustained engagement with the CPDL model, that colleagues were "becoming interested" in what they had to suggest about mentoring and SP (Abigail, SR). Abigail shared: "within the school there is more support for what I am doing" (SR). Niamh reported that colleagues who previously absented themselves from the PST's lesson, were staying "at the back constantly and…listen[ing] constantly" (FG1). Additionally, they reported that an interest was "building" beyond the PE department (Aidan, FG1). This was reported by many CTs: "This year the [second subject] department are going to mentor and give some feedback to the student" (Niamh, [A], M-CoP3). Sean reported that he had "extended the mentoring to the [second subject] department" and "hope[d] to create a mentoring relationship with them" (SR). Niamh explained that such developments made their

role easier: “because from this…they are engaging and mentoring as well, which is quite good for me because…it’s time and effort” (FG1).

vi) Principal and School Management: Over time, CTs reported that principals and school management had begun to demonstrate greater value for their engagement and to provide support to varying degrees. In the case of Aidan, when his principal demonstrated a lack of interest, he lobbied the vice principal for support. He shared that with respect to ‘Croke Park Hours’, he posed the following question to his vice-principal VP: “why hinder the people who want to work” just because of “the few chancers [who] still aren’t gonna turn up” to engage (FG1). Aidan reported that “the deputy understood [and] was able to talk [their] principal around” (FG1). Padraig added that, over time, “the [same] principal and vice principal were quite supportive” (FG3). Due to Aidan’s positive influence on colleagues’ engagement, the principal agreed “as an initial idea” to “put aside” protected hours for “peer evaluation…between different subjects” (FG1). Ellen’s principal reportedly valued her SP work with the community and at school enough to permit her to speak “at the staff meeting…to try to get more teachers [involved]” (FG1). Due to the demonstration of sustained engagement, Oisín shared that his principal began to recognise his work: “I know I can go to the boss and say: ‘listen, we need to take an extra student teacher’ and he knows that it’s for a valid reason and it’s not, you know [about having more free lessons]” (FG1). He added that his principal “knows that [they] are the partner” and could see that “it’s mutually beneficial” (FG1). He attributed this support “to the good relationship that everyone has created” between the school and the partnership university through the PALAR M-CoP (FG1).

vii) UTs and PSTs: Some CTs reported that a value for and interest in the triad process grew amongst PE UTs since the inception of the study. Aidan reported: “I think the PE people here”

at the partnership university "are very grateful for us" (FG1). After a lesson observation, Aoife reported to feeling confident enough to ask the PE UT: "if you don't mind, we'll continue with how we normally do it?" (FG2). She expressed that the UT "was all ears" (FG2). A growing partnership approach was reflected in the UT being willing to "[sit] down" for "40 minutes" so that the she could "explain to her what pedagogical models [she] was using, why [she] was using them…and the rationale for [her] practice and what [she] had been guiding the student with and what the student was trying to do" (Aoife, FG2).

As indicated by Sean, mentoring a disinterested PST can reduce a CTs' sense of value and perceived competence. However, he explained that this challenge resulted in him developing further: "After close reflection and conversations within my PE department, I believe I can produce the level of mentoring I know I am capable of" (SR). Moreover, due to their engagement in the PALAR M-CoP, Niamh reported that "when a difficult situation…arose with [her] mentee…[she] felt more confident" to deal with it now (SR).

### 4.4.4 *Complex Power Strategies for Overcoming Power Asymmetries*

Whilst some barriers presented in the study were relatively simple and could be alleviated with straight-forward strategies, some were more complex reflecting the complicated interplay between multiple barriers (culture, structures and relationships) and multiple partners with varying degrees of power. As the data intonates, a variety of layered strategies were adopted with multiple partners and their relationships in mind. The following data aim to

capture this by sharing one exceptional example and a number of common examples of approaches for overcoming power asymmetries.

#### *4.4.4.1.1 Exceptional Approach for Overcoming Complex Barrier*

As CTs supported one another and shared their strategies for overcoming barriers, they celebrated Ellen's handling of a complex problem. In the case of Ellen's demotivated colleague, she sought to identify a "carrot" which she felt would re-engage her. Ellen arranged for the colleague to be invited to the partnership university to share her expertise at a teacher education event. She accepted and Ellen reported that she became much more supportive of Ellen and the SP process. Ellen relayed back that her colleague "enjoyed that and she had been dying to get involved in something like that. She's very interested now…It's improved…it's great for me" (M-CoP2). After some time, Ellen felt she had developed a strong bargaining position to use her knowledge and experience as power 'chips' to change her position within the school staff. She approached the principal and volunteered to coordinate SP activities for other CTs within the school. She offered to share information and provide support and materials. The principal agreed:

> "I'm talking at the staff meeting next Wednesday…to try to get more teachers [involved]…I'm trying to get a little bit of this in, so no matter what the college is, for any teacher who has a student or anyone who is willing to have people in to watch them" (FG1).

Ellen reported back that she initially "got maybe 10 volunteers out of a staff of about 50" (FG1). Whilst this placed her in an informal position of power, she used her new position to gain some more control. She stipulated that she would take on this unpaid extra work provided she be

given decision making powers over which subjects the school accommodated for SP and she insisted that her subject be given priority: "I've had to put my foot down…I'm now in control of what subjects come in" (FG1). As such, she further alleviated her earlier fears about her vulnerability regarding engagement. Ellen also felt in a stronger position to insist that any new information about mentoring and SP come to her: "It [SP Handbook] ended up coming to me last week because I've requested that they come to me" (FG1). This placed Ellen in a position to ensure that valuable information could be cascaded to all staff members acting as a CT: "there's loads of information in it that I'm going to bring back to the staff next week but no-one was even reading that until I read it last week" (FG1). Ellen also planned to use her enhanced status to influence the quality of mentoring provision and to increase accountability somewhat: "if student teachers aren't being run well in the school, we will stop having them in altogether" (FG1).

#### 4.4.4.2 Common approach for Overcoming Complex Barrier

CTs reported that they felt they had moved into a stronger position to influence those within and beyond their schools. They took courage from the Teaching Council giving them an opportunity to share with "quite a lot of different people, like teachers and principals and 3rd levels" (Ria, M-CoP3). Ria reported that she felt confident enough in their pursuit to shine the spotlight on "who we are" as a PALAR M-CoP (M-CoP3). With the drive to gain "recognition" from important "stakeholders" (Aoife, FG2), CTs developed a range of strategies to enact change and overcome organisational power asymmetries.

a) <u>Using knowledge and experience as power:</u> CTs regularly referred to power in relation to knowledge. They reported that becoming more expert enhanced the legitimacy of their

individual voice, which placed them in a stronger position in the school hierarchy. Padraig insisted that he had "more confidence to…share information" because "it [was] backed up from [him] actually working on something for a couple of years" (FG3). With reference to the PALAR M-CoP's work, Sean stated: "I talk about it. They know what goes on…when I do have something to say, they do listen…a bit more" (FG2). Mary was grateful for knowledge that was co-generated in the PALAR M-CoP, feeling that it was easier to share with others because it was co-produced and not just her's. They found the posters to "be really helpful" (Caroline, M-CoP3) for "show[ing colleagues]…what [they were] doing" in the PALAR M-CoP (Aidan, M-CoP3). Mary added: "when we had an inspection…I was quite confident. It was quite helpful giving [posters] to other departments. Being here gives you that confidence with that information" (Mary, FG2)[44]. Where previously these CTs did not have the confidence to challenge the status quo, they increasingly reported to feeling in a stronger position to do so and were happy to 'come out' to the school: "Being part of this makes me more confident about being a good mentor...In the staff room, that it's okay to be in there with your student as opposed to: 'we don't do that here', you know" (Mary, FG2). As previously stated, with respect to "the role of mentoring and peer observation in schools" Aoife felt that it "is going to become formalized and mandatory in the future…and as a result, colleagues who wouldn't have been in the least bit interested in conversations with students after a class [were] actually listening to what [she was] talking about" (FG2). According to CTs, they had confidence in the expertise of the PALAR M-CoP members to act as a professional development provider for mentoring

[44] An example of the posters, which were constructed for the FEILTE conference can be found under appendix S.

and teacher evaluation: “You can be top of the room now giving CPDs. You’ve it all ahead of ya” (Aidan, FG1).

b) Advertising ‘strength in numbers’: A collective ‘people power’ effect was reported by CTs who felt that their position and status and – as such – their power, was bolstered and strengthened by being part of the PALAR M-CoP. Niamh insisted that hearing stories of impact in other community members’ schools gave them the strength to return to their own school with the back-up of those stories: “when we meet as a community and we see what other people are kinda’ doing as well it makes you feel: ‘okay, I can go back and say; sometimes we use names of schools. It helps!” (FG1). Ellen added that how they were received by colleagues was different for the following reason:

> “I can back it up by saying this isn’t just me. I am a part of a community of practice and I can see it happening in other schools …They’re not looking at me like: ‘whose this eegit coming in here and telling us’…like at least I can say: ‘I have spoken to other people and other people are doing it. I’m not the only eegit’” (FG1).

CTs also suggested that working with the partnership university gave them some credit. Aidan insisted that “there is a prestige [in being] linked to a university” (FG1).

c) Knowing your Audience and Biding your Time: Niamh agreed that she was “developing an eye for the right person to approach at the right time” and she insisted that as a strategy, “that’s huge” (FG1). In order to maintain their own commitment to the cause, Aidan agreed that initially, you have to “[go] after the people who are interested” (FG1), and that “there’s no

point in bringing in people who are not going to [engage]" (FG1). The intention was to "get it going. Hopefully [they'll] enjoy it. Hopefully then others [will] see and come on board" (Aidan, FG1). The importance of timing actions in advance was mentioned repeatedly and, in Niamh's case, with particular reference to discussing space in her timetable for mentoring for the following year:

> "I keep looking for May and May comes and so, I've gotta get the right time. The time has to be, 'I'll sit with you and put that in my timetable' and that's my next step. That's the next time for the right action because unless I sit with them, I'll get my 33 periods the next time" (FG1).

As stated previously, the fact that CTs could also see how slow progress was for all the other PALAR M-CoP members meant that they were not deterred. They continued to say: "I'll give it a go. I'll keep trying" (Niamh, FG1). Having considered why colleagues might not be engaging, CTs were very sensitive to the challenges of initiating change. They insisted that it was important for colleagues that they were "making it easy to start with" for colleagues (Aidan, FG1). There was an appreciation that they had to bide their time but that their actions were like "small acorns building oak trees" (GA, M-CoP3). They understood that in order to promote something, that "you've gotta give it a while. You've gotta do the work first to have something to shout about" (Padraig, FG3).

d) Delivering a Careful Sales Pitch: Padraig agreed that "how you deliver something is huge" (FG3). Ellen reported to being aware that she had: "to play [her] cards really, really carefully" (FG1). She commented: "I'm going in and saying that I am doing this…It is literally gonna' be; try and say as much as I can, in as few words as I possibly can, without pissing everyone

off" (FG1). Hoping that this would appease colleagues, Ellen planned to sell the concept as being beneficial to them and was also cautious not to incite the feared resentment of colleagues:

> "As opposed to telling them what to do, I'll be saying: 'this is what's here. I feel like I have benefitted from it. I think you could as well if you engaged with it. If you'd like to engage with it more, come; I've given you a flavour of it today but come to me and we can talk about it'…I am going in with a very very soft approach" (Ellen, FG1).

Referring to Ellen's strategy, Padraig emphasised that she garnered interest because she said: "this is really helping me [and] you'd be doing me a favour…because they [didn't] see it as an over-committal thing. It's how much they want to engage in it or not" (FG3). Niamh also reported to adopting a similar careful sales pitch:

> "I brought this back and said: 'I am doing this, if you'd like to do it…' and I gave them the whole: 'if you don't wanna do it, you don't have to but I will be doing it'. So then, the other PE teacher went: 'okay, if its going to help me in future, I'll do it'" (FG1)**.**

### *4.5 Conclusion*

This chapter tells the story of CTs who set out on a CPDL journey with negative perceptions of the impact of CPDL and research engagement. By the end of the study, they expressed that their feelings about CPDL had transformed. Ellen stated: "it's opened my eyes up to a different form of CPD[L]" (FG1). Padraig was particularly positive:

> "My CPD[L] experiences and perceptions have changed since the beginning of this study. Overall, my attitude is more positive, mainly down to this study invigorating me and providing me with more motivation towards CPD in the Irish School System…As a result, I feel the staleness and CPD[L] negative attitude has improved" (SR).

They also shared that they thought about research in a more "positive way" (Mary, FG1). As CTs' attitudes shifted, so did their priorities. As reflected in Mary's admission, CTs' hopes and targets were initially focused upon them and, in particular upon their growth as mentors: "at the start…I just want[ed] to be the best mentor…It was very personalized at the start. You know, give good feedback and do a good job" (FG2). Growth was demonstrated in the CTs' acknowledgment that "at the start, it's more individual and then it's wider" (Padraig, FG3). They pondered about how unexpectedly their hopes and actions evolved to drive for wider change: "It was just a natural growth… I didn't realize it at the start" (Padraig, FG3). Ellen declared: "my eyes have been more open to the bigger picture rather than why I initially became involved in it" (FG1). CTs came to the "realisation that [they could] be more of an agent in [their] own CPD[L] rather than a recipient only" (Ellen, SR). Their growth as a leader was also

prompted by their increasing self-perception, not only as "teacher educator", but also as "a catalyst of change" (Abigail, M-CoP1). This is indicated in Aoife's comment: it is "not only is it going beyond our own brains, it's going beyond our own classrooms" (FG2). CTs' targets evolved to consider empowerment and change first at school level, within their own departments, as expressed by Padraig: "could that not be a target for us? To start like small apples…and go back to our schools into our department… and sow seeds" (M-CoP3). Aidan aspired to enact change by engaging non-PE colleagues: "the new hope is that we can spread the word, to other teachers, not only PE teachers but the [second subject] teachers in the school" (M-CoP3). Mary's statement demonstrates further ambition for leadership and change: "you don't want it to be just this little area. You want it to be the norm…but…this needs to happen for everybody, for every PE teacher in every school…[the] hope [is] that this will go out to the wider community…and that every student genuinely will have that kind of experience of an engaged mentor" (FG2).

With respect to their capacity to support change, Sean joked that they had the ability "to rule the world: ha ha!" (FG2). They communicated that they were now "in a position to lead change in school" (Aoife, FG2). Éamonn believed: "change is in the wind…and…because of this, we're ahead of the posey as is were and we are comfortable and we're talking about it…We

needed to supervise to lead to the change" (FG3). Aoife felt that this placed them in a powerful position:

> "I think this is future proofing our skills and…we could be in a position to lead change in school when it comes that way because we can say: 'well, actually, we're COPET…'" (Aoife, FG2).

When asked if their engagement in the PALAR M-CoP had empowered them on the individual, community, school and / or wider professional level, Niamh's answer reflected many of the CTs: "I think it's a little bit of all of them" (FG1). CTs' indicated that they both empowered and were empowered by the PALAR M-CoP. They particularly expressed that their capacity and motivation to act was enabled by the "sharing [of] stories", triumphant outcomes and ideas for change (Mary, FG2). According to Aoife, community members relied upon one another to inspire a hunger to change their circumstances and to become organisationally empowered. For example, CTs learned that, "one of [the] members [had] created a role for herself within her school as mentor 'go-to person' for PST support" (Reflective Wall). They submitted a request to learn from her approach: "It'd be interesting for the next meeting, if Ellen could tell us how she managed to do what she did" (Aoife, FG2). Aoife added:

> "We took courage from others' boundary spanning…This gave us a vision of what was possible in our school communities, and gave us a 'template' of how we might contribute to this type of learning in our own schools…when I have the courage

(and energy) I would hope to convene a CoP within our school of [PST] mentors to support each other in this role" (Reflective Wall).

CTs described the capacity building nature of their work together as "a rising tide that lifts all boats" (Aoife, FG2). As CTs concluded their participation in the study, they were left feeling "excited" about the future and believed that in a [PALAR] 'mentoring CoP' [they could] start to effect change" (A, FG3). As they left the final workshop of the study, they were committed to answering the question: "what can I change?" next (Aidan, FG1).

# 5 Discussion

## *5.1 Discussion Introduction*

### 5.1.1 *Organisation of the Discussion*

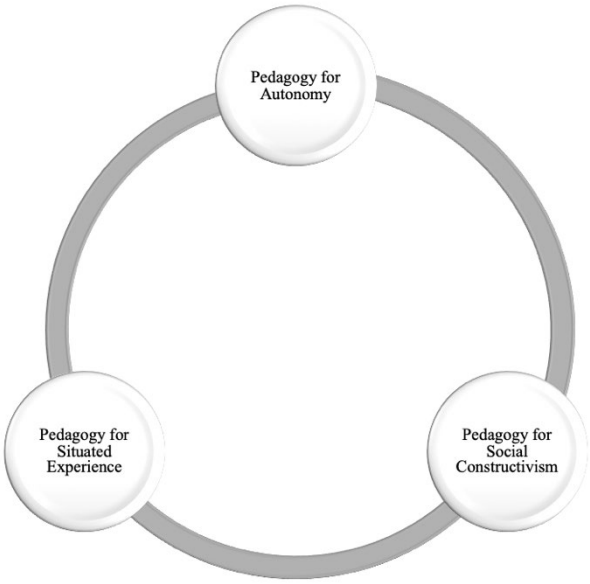
Similar to Enright (2010), my original thinking about the construction of the discussion evolved. Initially, my intended approach centred on four working research questions, which I set out to answer. However, my original method left me feeling that the individual treatment of research questions led to a failure to recognise the complex interplay of concepts; concept which overlapped and reinforced one another in the findings (Enright, 2010). Additionally, as Enright suggested: "I think and hope the previous chapters address these questions to some extent" (p. 194-195). To prevent the potential fragmentation of the overarched learning gained in this study, four resonating themes will be explored.

i. Transformative CPDL Meta-Design and Meta-Pedagogies for Mentor Growth
ii. Fluency in the 'Language of Critique'
iii. Fluency in the 'Language of Possibility'
iv. Fluency in the 'Language of Leadership for Empowerment and Change'

## *5.2 Transformative CPDL 'Meta-Design and 'Meta-Pedagogies' for Mentor Growth*

This study successfully sought to re-conceptualise the design and facilitation of CPDL (Parker and Patton, 2017), with the intention of promoting transformative CPDL outcomes for CTs (Taylor and Laros, 2014). The process of meta-design[45] is often considered to be a "daunting" "disorientating' and "confusing journey" (Golson and Glover, 2009, p. 2). Though the "undisturbed waters of old, safe approaches" to CPDL may be tempting, they fail to "harness [the] powerful new energy made possible by mixing" theories, which allow a powerful meta-pedagogy to emerge (Golson and Glover, 2009, p. 2). It is argued that due to the design's sensitivity to CTs' initial conditions, as well as their historical CPDL locations, and their evolving needs (Haggis, 2008; Rahman *et al.,* 2014; Maiese, 2017), an appropriate 'meta-pedagogy' emerged including a: 'pedagogy for autonomy', 'pedagogy for social constructivism' and 'pedagogy for situated experience'.

Figure 5-1 Meta-pedagogies for Transformative Mentor CPDL




[45] Of both theoretical meta-design and meta-models

This thematic discussion addresses the following research questions.

Table 17 Research Questions: Theme 1

| Main Research Question |
| --- |
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| 1. Can a PALAR M-CoP act as a transformative CPDL vehicle for CTs' growth; and if so, what elements of the CPDL model support growth? |

### 5.2.1 *Pedagogy for Autonomy*

Democratic pedagogies (Dewey, 1916) which are learner centred and autonomy-supportive (Ciani *et al.,* 2010; Kiemer, Gröschner, Kunter and Seidel, 2018), are well documented to support discovery, inquiry and transformation (Sammut, 2014). However, such conceptual thinking is said to be infrequent in discussions pertaining to both CPDL model (Taylor and Laros, 2014; Boylan *et al.*, 2018; Smith and Erdoğan 2008 cited in Manzano Vázquez, 2018) and research design and facilitation (Greenwood *et al.,* 1993; Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010). As confirmed by the CTs in this study, an unlimited level of undirected teacher autonomy is known to detrimentally impact growth and professionalism (Coolahan, 1995, 2003; Sugrue, 2002; King, 2016). Equally, top-down, policy-mandated CPDL (Brennan, 2017) serves to stifle teachers' sense of volition[46]. As expressed, this hinders

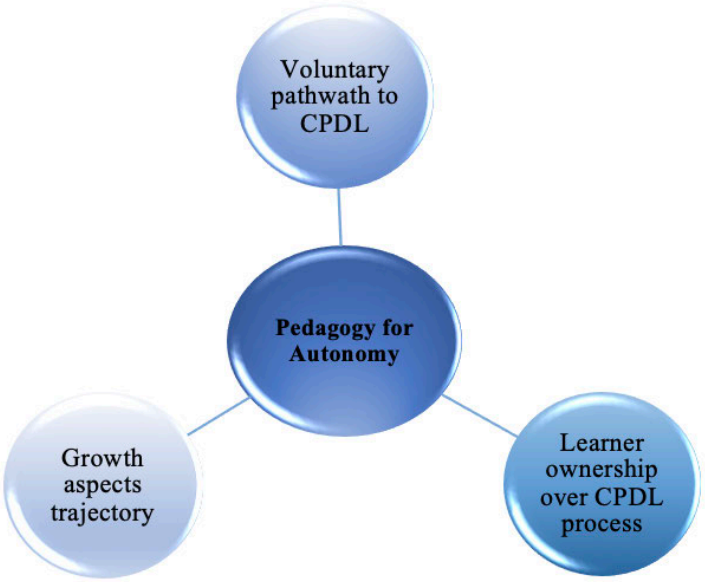
[46] The above contradiction is reflected in mentoring also. Mentoring CPDL programmes result in the adoption of overly directive mentoring approaches (Taherian and Shekarchian, 2008; Clarke *et al.,* 2014; O'Grady, 2017). Meanwhile, other accounts raise the issue of absentee mentors who, under the guise of offering autonomy, abandon the PST (Clarke *et al.,* 2014).

teachers' capacity for ownership and choice (Deci *et al.,* 1991; Ciani *et al.,* 2010; Kiemer *et al.,* 2018) and subsequently, their inner motivation to engage in CPDL (Kiemer *et al.*, 2018).

The CPDL meta-model in this study demonstrated a sensitivity towards CTs' negative frames of reference (Maiese, 2017) regarding teacher autonomy in their CPDL journey and mentoring practices. Processes were explicitly utilized to undo CTs' "twisted views of the [CPDL and research] world" (Howie and Bagnall, 2013, p. 821), by adopting a 'pedagogy for autonomy' (Jiménez, 2011; Manzano Vázquez, 2015). The autonomy-supportive conditions (Day *et al.,* 2006) of the PALAR M-CoP were found to garner transformative outcomes for developing mentors. As per Dewey's (1916) theories on democracy, the meta-model centred upon the entitlement of teachers to nurture their distinctive capacities. Self-actualisation was achieved as they pursued their potential, developing in such a way that was true to their nature and evolving needs (Ivtzan, Gardner, Bernard, Sekhon, and Hart, 2013). As shared by the CTs in this study, the personalised and participant driven characteristics of the PALAR M-CoP supported mentoring growth and transformation. As per the meta-theory concept, this theme is explored partially using 'progressive education theory' (Dewey, 1916) and 'self-determination

theory' features (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000). As illustrated below, three overarching but interconnected key elements are explored.

Figure 5-2 Pedagogy for Autonomy Key Elements




*Voluntary pathway to CPDL*: The psychological freedom to determine one's own behaviour (Assor, Kaplan and Roth, 2002; Kiemer *et al.,* 2018), and make decisions, is widely agreed to be a key attribute of teacher autonomy. An under-explored aspect of autonomy in the literature relates to teachers' self-determination to participate in CPDL. Critical of policy-mandated processes (Brennan, 2017), CTs in this study highly valued having the opportunity to volunteer, a pathway recommended by King (2016). "Rather than feeling controlled and coerced by external forces", CTs' deliberate pathway to their involvement gifted them with "a sense of ownership" and control (Ciani *et al.,* 2010, p. 90). As per this study, the opportunity to exercise volition (Benita *et al.,* 2013; Draper *et al.*, 2011) has a direct impact upon teachers' internal compulsion to engage more fully in the CPDL process (De Charms, 1968 cited in Benita *et al.,* 2013, p. 259-260), as well as their self-determination to continue (Ryan and Deci, 2006; Benita *et al.,* 2013). Both of these factors contribute to the likelihood of attitudinal and intellectual

growth (Evans, 2014). In the absence of ITE mentoring (Mullen, 2010; Kelly and Tannehill, 2012; Young and MacPhail, 2015; O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018), having access to choose mentoring CPDL (Evans, 2014) was very important to the CTs. They are an example of how 'learner choice' (Keskin, 2014) positively impacts upon teachers' relationship with (Ofper and Peddar, 2011) and commitment to their learning (De Charms, 1968 cited in Benita *et al.,* 2013). As discovered, such an opportunity also enhances a teachers' personal initiative and sense of responsibility for the outcomes of their current and future CPDL decisions, actions and efforts (Hetzner, Heid and Gruber*,* 2012).

*Learner centredness and ownership*: The PALAR M-CoP model was considered to be more learner centred (Dewey, 1916) and autonomy supportive (Benita *et al.,* 2013; Kennedy, 2014; King, 2016; Brennan, 2017) than centrally pre-designed models (Rahman *et al.,* 2014) which offer a 'one size fits all' CPDL experience (Hogan *et al.,* 2007; King, 2011). Unlike system-serving approaches which conflict with teachers' individual aspirations and needs (Teaching Council, 2012; McMillan *et al.,* 2016), the model in this study was described as personalised and participant driven. A 'deliberative democracy' (Sant, 2019) was promoted by affording CTs an agenda setting voice (Blackstock *et al.*, 2007 cited in Trimble and Lázaro, 2014), whereby they had the opportunity to both determine and personalise the contents of the mentoring CPDL syllabus, as recommended by McDonald (2014). The subsequent development of "proactive autonomy" (Littlewood, 1999, p. 75) is said to enhance feelings of ownership over CPDL (Patton *et al.,* 2015; Draper *et al.,* 2011; Ryan and Deci, 2006, p. 1577 cited in Benita *et al.,* 2013). As recommended, CTs determined the "direction and trajectory of their learning" (Glassman and Erdem, 2014, p. 320) as they took more responsibility for and control over CPDL processes, such as target-setting, problem solving and decision making (Manzano Vázquez, 2018). This model differed from models which are criticised for measuring

growth against pre-determined outcomes (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). The PALAR M-CoP promoted CT evaluation against self-determined learning goals, a right, which is necessary for the development of proactive autonomy (Littlewood, 1999). As CTs shared, the PALAR M-CoP was found to "create multiple, cumulative opportunities for teachers to test, review and refine" not only their own evolving practices, as suggested by Cordingley (2016, p. 54) but also their shifting priorities. This study offers an example of how continued engagement in a learning domain through multiple learning processes, expands the scope of potential for teachers within that specific learning domain (Girvan *et al.,* 2016), in this case: mentoring. As priorities diverge *within* the learning domain, as opposed to prematurely digressing *to* a different learning domain, deeper learning can occur.

*Trajectory of growth aspects*: Though a strong relationship has been identified between identity development, teacher autonomy and long-term CPDL commitment (Huang, 2011), CPDL model designs rarely consider the growing professional identity of the teacher (Boylan *et al.,* 2018). Contrary to this habit, this work "accounted for the diversity of capacities that…[exist]…in different human beings" (Dewey, 1934, p. 5)" (Shyman, 2011, p. 1040). CTs' professional identity was boosted by their perception of themsleves as mentor experts (Bromme, 1991 cited in Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). As is expanded upon in a later thematic discussion, though the CTs in this study embarked upon the CPDL journey committed to growing as mentors, to varying degrees, they also admitted to growing as: teachers, (mentor) leaders, researchers, and as people (Poekert *et al.*, 2016). At different stages of the journey and to varying degrees, the growth of a multiplicity of identities (Amaral-da-Cunha, Graça, Batista, and MacPhail, 2020) was provided with the time, space and support to evolve, as the CTs saw fit.

Readiness to learn is a predictor of whether or not teachers engage in effective planned behaviours for practice change (Elik, Wiener and Corkum, 2010) and whether or not change outcomes occur (Hetzner *et al.,* 2012). Given that the CTs in this study were coming to terms with greater SP expectations and responsibilities (Teaching Council, 2013), their adamant insistence that research participation should initially be secondary to mentoring CPDL engagement, was unsurprising. As found in this study and recommended by scholars (Draper *et al.,* 2011; Wood and Zuber-Skerrit, 2013), it is important that CPDL facilitators respect teachers' initial prioritization of the domain specific aspect of the CPDL, in this case, mentoring. The meta-design co-adaptive approach allowed for a mismatch of needs to be prevented (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008) and as a result, the explicit introduction of research participation was tempered and built gradually (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010). This work revealed the initial need for the facilitator to patiently make compromises, by taking predominant responsibility for driving the research forward (Draper *et al.,* 2011; Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). A 'collaborative-directive style' of facilitation allowed the CTs to engage in PAR processes implicitly, whilst reserving their explicit attention to 'research' until it was meaningful enough to them (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010). Initially, they did as Draper *et al.* (2011) recommend: "they shared responsibility for the direction of conversations and work of the group" (p. 16). As evidenced in this work, this allows CTs to engage but, as Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout (2010) suggest, does not force them "into a role they [are] not yet willing to assume" (p. 228). As per the chosen meta-design, when the time was right, their own knowledge about their participation was returned to the community and the value of such participation was made more explicit (Sobottka, 2013). As verified by the CTs in this study, such a naturally evolving democratic approach (Enright, 2010; Greenwood *et al.,* 1993) makes the teachers more open to hearing about research processes and

theory (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010) and more aware of and capable of anticipating their own research participation (Serrano-García, 1990). As with other examples of democratic learning, this was important because "the more autonomous the behavior, the more it is endorsed by the whole self and is experienced as action for which one is responsible" (Deci and Ryan, 1987, p. 1025). The findings concur with Woods and Zuber-Skerritt's (2013) work, which found that explicit participation can only be increased once teachers show an interest in doing so. As the CTs in this study indicated, it is important that the "expert researcher" pitches the promotion of participation at a level that CTs are prepared for (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010, p. 228) and at the right time (Bond 1990 cited in Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016). As gleaned in this study, a democratic approach increases the likelihood of teachers becoming more aware of the potential benefits of educational research, thus placing it higher on their agenda (Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010).

The findings of this study indicate that a PALAR M-CoP model can contribute to the thinking of transformative learning theorists who faced "inherent challenges associated with the meaning and implementation of learner control" (Taylor and Laros, 2014, p. 140). As the literature suggests, the PALAR M-CoP model created opportunities for CTs in this study to experience autonomous learning and exercise a sense of self-determination as developing mentors (Manzano Vázquez, 2018).

### 5.2.2 *A 'Pedagogy for Social Constructivism' (through situated cognition)*

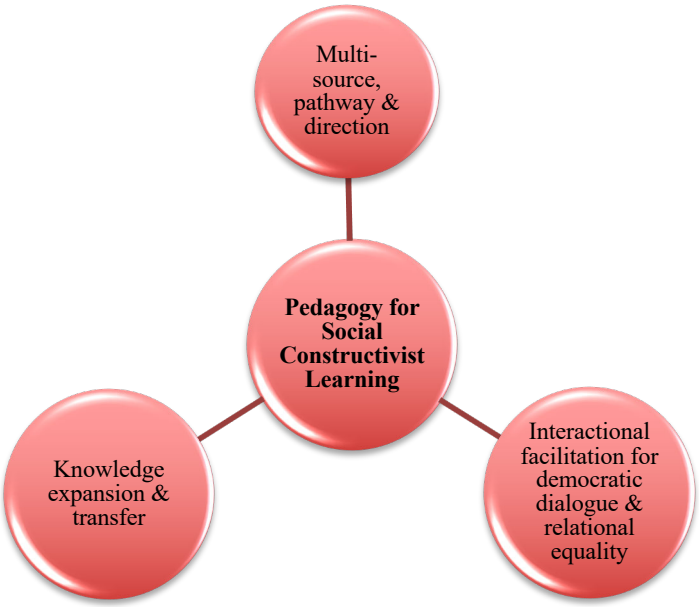
"The power to grow depends upon need for others" (Dewey, 1916, p. 35).

Social learning theory which builds upon the foundation of social constructivism,

involves people learning through a collaborative process, as they co-construct knowledge (Löfström and Nevgi, 2006; Gaytan, 2013; Williams-Newball, 2014). Despite widespread appreciation for such thinking, in Ireland (OECD, 2009; Kennedy, 2014) and abroad (Boylan *et al.,* 2018), CPDL model designers have neglected the social learning domain (OECD, 2009; Boylan *et al.,* 2018), weakly and infrequently embedding social constructivist principles (Vygotsky, 1978). CTs in this study attributed this, in part, to the common provision of transmissive (Kennedy, 2014), one-off CPDL events (Brennan, 2017). Though the potential for professional collaborative learning has been evidenced in mentoring (Chambers *et al.,* 2011; Young and MacPhail, 2015); CoPs (Pyrko *et al.,* 2017) and teacher inquiry (Kearney and Zuber-Skerrit, 2012), such learning processes have sometimes failed to promote co-thinking and mutual learning (OECD, 2009; Steens and Sheerens, 2010; Teaching Council, 2010a, Conway, 2013; Clonan, 2017). From a relational perspective, they have been known to buttress and perpetuate the status quo (Wenger and Snyder, 2000; Baker and Beames, 2016; Teare, 2013; Chambers *et al.,* 2015), which is often undemocratic and vertically hierarchical (Malin and Heath, 2014, Williams-Newball, 2014). As shared in this study, such models can mute participant voice, undermine democratic participation (Malin and Heath, 2014) and interaction (Piaget, 1970); and thus, negate transformative learning outcomes (Kennedy, 2014; Brennan, 2017). Contrary to the above, the social capacity of the mentoring (Young and MacPhail, 2015), CoPs (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011), and PALAR (Trimble and Lázaro, 2014) processes were found to each play a significant role in the provision of opportunities, which were dynamic, inclusive (Abdi, 2001; Shyman, 2011), reciprocal (Williams-Newball, 2014), and co-generative (David *et al.,* 2003). This thematic sub-section explores how a PALAR M-CoP uses social constructivist principles (Löfström and Nevgi, 2006; Gaytan, 2013) and knowledge management strategies (Williams-Newball, 2014) to facilitate democratic (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011) social participation (Wenger,

1998). This resulted in the establishment of a "horizontal hierarchy" (Malim and Heath, 2014, p. 368), which paved the way for knowledge co-construction and expansion (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). The following interconnected themes are explored.

Figure 5-3 Pedagogy for Social Constructivist Learning Key Elements




*Multi-source, multi-pathway and multi-directional approach of a PALAR M-CoP:* The multi-source nature of the CPDL model contributed to CTs' growth and transformation. As per Vygotsky's (1962) 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), CTs in this study acknowledged that supportive others helped them to realize their potential as mentors (Powell and Kalina, 2009). Unlike the "traditional one-shot" (Patton *et al.,* 2013, p. 457) discreet PD events (Boylan *et al.,* 2018), like those offered by Guskey (2002) and Evans (2014), the PALAR M-CoP did not rely upon external information, or overuse external stimuli or support (see Guskey, 2002; Desimone, 2009 and Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002; Boylan *et al.,* 2018). Whilst the CTs supported the claim that external input is helpful to a community's progress (O'Sullivan, 2011; King and Feely; 2014; Brennan, 2017), significant value was expressed for the way in which

the model recognized and maximized CTs' capacity to grow as powerful sources of their own and others' learning (Malin and Heath, 2014). As progressive education (Dewey, 1916; Shyman, 2011) and social constructivist theorists (Vygotsky, 1978; Gaytan, 2013) assert, growth is not achieved alone but instead, in communion with others, to mutual benefit.

CoP members contributed to constructivist learning opportunities for one another when engaging in the community space (Kakavelakis and Edwards, 2011). However, whilst social constructivists view learning as a socially constructed phenomenon, they also perceive it to be a culturally constructed one (Bonk and Cunningham, 1998; Williams-Newball, 2014). Therefore, it is prudent to acknowledge that, beyond the immediate community space, the situatedness of SP offered an additional interconnected pathway for learning (Boylan *et al.,* 2018) with other significant players such as: PSTs, UTs and other CT colleagues in school[47]. The PALAR M-CoP is proposed to have used this pathway to promote knowledge management for acquiring, creating and sharing CTs' knowledge within the M-CoP, as promoted by Williams-Newball (2014).

Within the community space, the PALAR M-CoP was found to maximize a "multi-directional" (Azmitia, 2000 cited in Duncombe and Armour, 2004, p. 150) and active learning approach (Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016; Girvan *et al.,* 2016; Labone and Long, 2016) to CPDL for mentors. It is proffered that whilst the facilitator may engage in CPDL 'with learners', a facilitative pedagogy (Poekert, 2011) must be adopted to allow learners to engage in, and with their CPDL together. As CTs in this study shared, the PALAR M-CoP fosters a "participative democracy"

[47] As social constructivist learning occurs with such partners during the school placement phase, this will be further examined in the next section: 'pedagogy for situated experience'. As per the interactional perspective, it must be acknowledged that, whilst examined predominantly consecutively in this thesis, theoretical perspectives and concepts from both are discussed concurrently to reflect how operationally reinforcing and interdependent they are.

(Malin and Heath, 2014, p. 378) by, in part, rejecting the view of learners as passive receivers of knowledge (Loughran and Gunstone, 1997, p. 161). The model's "participative dynamic" (Thompson, 2005, p. 152) minimized an exchange of information approach by excluding theoretical and instructive presentations, as recommended by Malin and Heath (2014). Instead, learning was perceived to be a joint venture, with new understanding being actively generated rather than clinically transferred. As both the literature and CTs reported, a gradual power shift from the facilitator to the community members is appropriate (Greenwood, Whyte and Harkavy, 1993; Serrano-García 1994; Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2010). CoPs can be dynamically complex and thus, time is required for trust to be fostered and for members to fully engage (Day, 1999). The PALAR M-CoP, with its iterative and sustained features, offered the gradual development of relational and interactional processes (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011) to support social constructivist learning outcomes.

*Interactional facilitation for democratic dialogue and relational equality*: The concept of dialogue 'as' collaboration was frequently raised throughout this study (Thorkildsen, 2013). However, this work emphasises that whilst participant voice is "an essential communicative element of participative democracy" (Malim and Heath, 2014, p. 370), conversational dynamics can also undermine it (Mirra *et al.,* 2016). The CPDL system in this study promoted democratic multi-directional learning through the facilitation of democratic dialogue (Malim and Heath, 2014). Adopting a "pragmatic-constructivist approach" to discussion (Shotter and Gustavsen, 1999 cited in Thorkildsen, 2013, p. 31) ensured that voices were not stifled, blocked, or ignored, neither unintentionally nor deliberately (Deetz, 1992 cited in Malim and Heath, 2014). As CTs reported, feeling as though one has "the right to speak" (Hall, 1981 cited in Glassman and Erdem, 2014, p. 217) makes individuals feel like equally important partners during discussions (Ennals and Gustavsen, 1999; Glassman and Erdem, 2014). This supports

Brennan's (2017) finding that communities can provide teachers with "a safe and supportive space" (p. 194). In agreement with scholars (Borko, 2004; Van Kruiningen, 2013), engagement with equipment, resources and pre-group tasks provided them with the time and space to cognitively construct their own position on issues (Piaget, 1953). This aligns with Piaget's 'cognitive constructivist' thinking, which celebrates the individual and respects their own personal process, as they draw upon their own experience to gain knowledge (Powell and Kalina, 2009). This encourages them to feel more secure in their contributions and thus, they are more likely to speak up (Sussman *et al.,* 1991; Berg, 2004). Yarning was found to provide "room for each individual's subjective understanding" and priorities (Glassman and Erdem, 2014, p. 209). The 'turn-taking' approach promoted during dialogic activities also helped to incrementally "construct and perpetuate common ground" between CTs (Clark, 1996; Van Kruiningen, 2013, p. 118), whilst also levelling the playing field between them (Wright, 2015). As "an atmosphere of trust [and] honesty is fostered […] a respect for diversity and openness" is promoted (Wood and Zuber-Skerrit, 2013, p. 11) and authentic relationships can be developed (Sammut, 2014). Such conditions contribute to discussions becoming more questioning and open (Sammut, 2014, p. 51), which increases the opportunity for knowledge co-construction and growth.

*Knowledge expansion and transfer:* As CoP literature proposes (Patton *et al.,* 2005), the domain dimension brought likeminded CTs together who shared a passion for mentoring. The ongoing community dimension gave them the space to share and explore their evolving practice back at school (Patton and Parker, 2015). As widely agreed by scholars, CTs found this to be a powerful learning process (Van Kruningen, 2013; Scheerens and Sleeger, 2010). Interactive engagement with CPDL artefacts was found to stimulate the co-construction of mentoring knowledge as the CTs debated issues (Van Buuren and Edelenbos, 2001 cited in

Williams-Newball, 2014), exchanged opinions, explored consequences of practice and negotiated practice based solutions (Good and Brophy, 1996 cited in Williams-Newball, 2014). Though at an off-site location, "the situated nature of cognition" was drawn upon in order to co-construct "useable, robust knowledge" (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989, p. 32). 'Yarning', as recommended by Smith *et al.* (2010), provided CTs with a powerful dialogic platform for drawing context into their discussions. In doing so, they engaged "with others' ways of knowing" through processes which were "affective and relational" (Sammut, 2014, p. 50). PALAR processes prompted them to share their struggles, fears, and triumphs, which focused their cognitions upon "the see-feel-change sequence" (Brown, 2006 cited in Sammut, 2014, p. 50). CTs indicated that this was a helpful approach for understanding one another's practice, as reported by several scholars (Van Kruiningen, 2013; Olensen and Nordentoft, 2013; Zachery, 2009). As Walker, Fredericks, Mills, and Anderson (2014) profess, it "illuminate[d] knowledge that might be missed when using more structured techniques" (p. 247). This study demonstrated that as a mentoring community reaches a degree of consensus about best practice, CTs feel validated (Parker, Patton and Sinclair, 2016) and more open to sharing their knowledge and practice with one another (Williams-Newball, 2014). Ultimately, they grew in relation to one another (Britt, 2012 cited in Kalles and Ryan, 2015), generating new ideas (Lindquist *et al.,* 2006; Williams-Newball, 2014), making new links and reshaping their existing knowledge into new forms (McNiff, 2013). Not only was individual knowledge converted to shared knowledge (Stoll *et al.,* 2006), CTs came to understand how to use the practical knowledge they were developing beyond the CoP context (Catalano, 2015), back on SP. As CTs in this study developed 'learning conversation' skills (Crasborn *et al.,* 2010; Harrison and Lee, 2011), they were better equipped to explicate not just the 'what' and the 'how' of stories, but also the 'why' (Timperley, 2010). On an individual level, CTs' consciousness of their knowledge was shifted on the continuum from tacit to explicit

(Chomsky, 1965; Brown *et al.* 2006 cited in Williams-Newball, 2014). Sharing the 'why' of their mentoring practices also assisted other community members to more accurately judge if shared practices were a good fit for their own contexts (Wenger, 2009). This prevented the knowledge from being too general (Gee, 1997; Catalano, 2015) and enhanced CTs' ability to transfer acquired knowledge and skills to new situations (Christie *et al.,* 2015).

As noted above, and as will be further explored, due to the SP phase of the model, CTs had the opportunity to 'boundary span' beyond the CoP (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). It is suggested that boundary spanning helped CTs to overcome the comfortable consensus, which can be reinforced in CoPs (Kakavelakis and Edwards, 2011). In addition to learning with different PSTs, the CoP's growing practice was exposed to and challenged by different practices and attitudes from different locations and professionals (Catalano, 2015). It is believed that this made them more "permeable to knowledge" beyond their own environments (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011, p. 361). This cross-school CoP composition offered CTs an opportunity to "gaze outward from their culture onto another" (Lave, 1991, p. 63), as "the recombination of bodies of existing knowledge" led to knowledge expansion (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011, p. 361). A cross-location community provoked the re-framing of knowledge and practice (Schön, 1993), by the drawing in of diversity and freshness (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011, p. 361), which can prompt "conflict, difference and change" (Kakavelakis and Edwards, 2011, p. 476). Individual CTs were empowered by the community composition and equally, each individual empowered the community (Zimmerman, 2000). PALAR processes led to a familiarity with discursive deliberation and contestation (Malin and Heath, 2014, p. 378) and a diversity of thinking which encouraged "deviant opinion" (Hargreaves, 1999, p. 126). The work indicates that the consequent dissensus and difference "prevent[ed] the reification of institutional patterns of interaction" (Apple, 1990, p. 34 cited in

Schmidt, 2007, p. 12) and that CTs' practice and knowledge grew and was transformed.

### 5.2.3 *A Pedagogy for 'Situated and Experiential Learning'*

Contrary to their PALAR M-CoP experiences, the CTs in this study verified past criticisms of CPDL in Ireland (Hogan *et al.,* 2007; Conway *et al.,* 2009) and abroad (Opfer and Pedder, 2011). Their condemnation supports the claims that model designers such as Guskey (2002) and Desimone (2009) and facilitators continue to offer single path, linear, disconnected and deterministic CPDL approaches[48] (Rahman *et al.,* 2014; Boylan *et al.,* 2018), which neglect the situated (Boylan *et al.,* 2018) and experiential nature of professional learning (Blair, 2016). Dissimilar to the limitations of traditional provision (Rahman *et al.,* 2014; Brennan, 2017), the PALAR M-CoP accounted for context. Contrary to scholars' critique (Cobb and Bowers, 1999 cited in Korthagan, 2010), the CPDL model in this work did not presume that teachers could simply transport pre-determined learning from one generalized CPDL event, at an external physical location, to their school site. Even in the case of embedded CPDL, which is believed to offer contextual experiences (Teaching Council, 2016), teachers' capacity to decontextualize and recontextualise CPDL learning was not assumed. In contrast with their past experiences and the findings of Kennedy, the model in this study did not lead to CTs feeling patronised (Kennedy, 2014) or struggling to connect the learning content to their lived practice during the SP phase (Kennedy, 2014). CTs reported that such past provision resulted in limited change (Brown *et al.,* 1989; Korthagan, 2010). It is suggested that this departure from standard provision (Brennan, 2017), prevented the all too common "alienation of teachers from the very

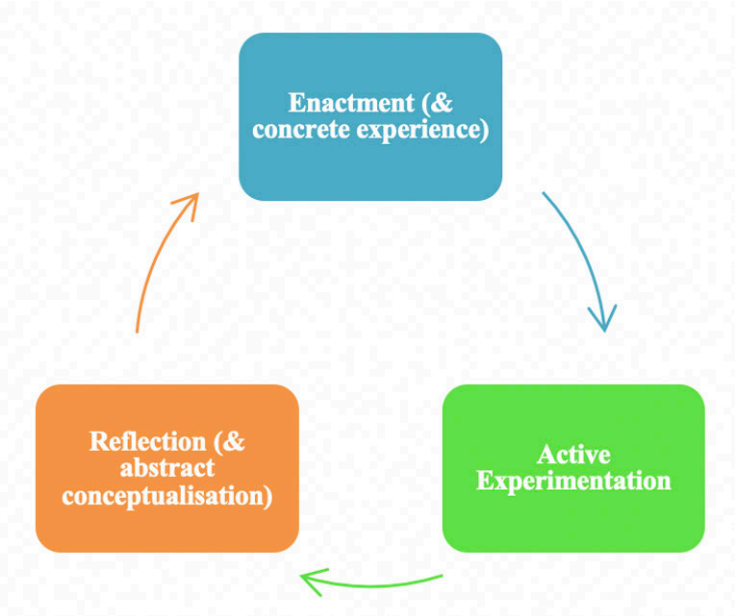
[48] 'Single path', being linear; disconnected being a failure to support teachers to connect and reconcile the theory of their CPDL to practice; and deterministic being a failure to grasp that the learning content and processes may need to vary and evolve to meet the needs of the community due to a strict adherence to a pre-determined, centrally designed CPDL plan, which is often rolled out nationally and is evaluated based on pre-determined outcomes.

start of the professional development process" (Girvan *et al.,* 2016, p. 130), which tends to result in poor outcomes and limited impact from reform attempts (Girvan *et al.,* 2016, p. 130).

Evidence from this study highlights that the transformative potential of the PALAR M-CoP was precluded by its capacity for contextual operationalization (Morgan, 1983 cited in Howie and Bagnall, 2013). As promoted by scholars (Hall and Hord 2006 cited in King, 2016, p. 578), the PALAR M-CoP model explicitly built a multi-pathway "implementation bridge" to assist CTs to reconcile their new learning with their existing practice. As Dewey (1938) explained: "experience [is] an important teacher because [learners can] reflect on it, think critically about how knowledge and skills are used to address problems in the world, and apply the knowledge learned from such experience to new contexts" (p. 82). As recommended by scholars (e.g. Zeichner, 1987; King, 2016), this prevented the CTs in this study from abandoning the professional learning accrued in the PALAR M-CoP, once they returned to their respective schools. To achieve this operationally, over an extended period of time, this study borrowed features from Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) model. Although an effective CPDL model can partially empower individuals and communities, true perceived competence can only be

realised through the embedded 'enactment' of, 'active experimentation' of (Kolb, 1984) and 'reflection in, on and for' their growing practice (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002).

Figure 5-4 Pedagogy for Situated and Experiential Learning Enactment Cycle




Enactment (concrete experience): As recommended by scholars, the CPDL system gave learners the opportunity to explicitly connect their growing knowledge and skills to their social world (Brown *et al.,* 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Korthagan, 2010; Huang *et al.,* 2011; Labone and Long, 2016; Boylan *et al.,* 2018). As Brown *et al.* (1989) insist, learners who develop beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge to the active use of knowledge, "build an increasingly rich implicit understanding of the world in which they use the [knowledge] and of the [knowledge]" itself (p. 33). Because the model offered the authentic learning experience of SP phases (Herrington and Oliver, 2000), which were physically situated in the school setting, it reached into CTs' day-to-day practice, facilitating them to actively make real life connections

to their mentoring CPDL (Huang *et al.,* 2011; Glassman and Erdem, 2014)[49]. Adopting a situated perspective (Hanks, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991), the system narrowed relational gaps in the social experience left by the community workshops. Introducing authentic SP partners such as PSTs and UTs into the CPDL equation presented the CTs with the challenge of applying and adjusting their evolving practice as mentors. As Lighthall (2004) explains, the domain of mentoring itself is "ineluctably caught in particulars" (p. 224). CTs in this study worked with, and learned from multiple PSTs over time who were "coping with their own particular situations, skills, capacities and problems" (p. 224). The CTs have the opportunity to work with a PST over an extended period of time, and also to then move on to work with other PSTs. Applying CPDL learning from one PST to the next this allows for "specific patterns of experience tied to specific sorts of contexts" to unfold (Gee, 1997). This allows for "mid level generalizations" to be drawn which are "not too specific and not too general, not totally contextualized, not totally de-contextualized" (Korthagan, 2010, p. 102). Such thinking enables the CT to exercise "mindful abstraction" (Salomon and Perkins, 1989, p. 124), whereby they deliberately decontextualize a mentoring idea learned from mentoring one PST and adapt its original application to use with another PST.[50] As per cognitive learning principles (Catalano, 2015), the CTs used the environment "as a driving force and anchoring framework for" PSTs' learning (Huang *et al.,* 2011, p. 1201). Generative mentoring CPDL prompted CTs to explicate the contextual intricacies of their own practice (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005). Contrary to Hall *et al.*'s (2018) assertion, educative mentoring prevented them from relying upon technical rational approaches, and as such, CTs became adept at "emphasizing...the why of practice" as

[49] The interconnected workings of social constructivist learning and situated-experiential learning are apparent. M-CoP workshops in this study activated CTs' situated cognition as they centred their social constructivist thinking upon their mentoring interactions with their PSTs, as well as the application of their mentoring targets (Browne *et al*., 1989; Van Kruiningen, 2013).

[50] This process applied also to mentoring practices learned in the M-CoP space, which CTs then sought to apply to their own SP contexts back in the school space.

opposed to just "the what and how" (Clarke *et al.,* 2014, p. 175). In an attempt to support PSTs' wider comprehension of situated practice (Colvin and Ashman, 2010), some CTs attempted to de-contextualise pedagogical concepts in order to challenge their PSTs to consider the outcomes of their practice in other contexts and under different circumstances. Thus, how they enacted their CPDL with their PST resulted in both CTs and their PSTs seeing their evolving practices through different lenses (Marton, Dahlgren, Svensson, and Saljo, 1977)[51].

Active Experimentation: Sammut (2014) declares that transformation is realised through situated inquiry and discovery. Aligning to this thinking, the PALAR M-CoP in this study did not tie its success to predetermined or repeatable outcomes (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). This thesis suggests that the permission and drive to creatively play with and regulate learning is dependent upon the valued establishment of a 'pedagogy for autonomy' (Manzano Vázquez, 2018). As discussed already, a prioritization of agency, autonomy, identity construction and democracy left space for CTs to pursue evolving salient priorities (Archer, 1996, 2000). Equally, the social constructivist learning within the M-CoP presented CTs with ideas and provoked new ones, sparking a desire to practice innovatively (Wenger, 2009; Geertz, 1973). Though the CTs all attended the same workshops, they each cast their sights on individual mentoring challenges and set individual mentoring targets (Manzano Vázquez, 2018). In doing so, they played creatively with their learning and practice in ways which connected to their situation (Rowe and Frewer 2000 cited in Trimble and Lázaro, 2014; Sobottka, 2013). As CTs updated one another about their inquiries and discoveries, they were encouraged to imaginatively

[51] Whilst it is beyond the key focus of this discussion, it is important to acknowledge that mentors' developed the 'growth as a teacher' aspect of professional learning (Poekert *et al.,* 2017) through a raised appreciation of supporting situated learning for their PST. "Content-focused" educative approaches (Achinstein and Davis, 2014, p. 107) expanded their own pedagogical expertise, as PSTs' lessons presented them with opportunities, challenges, questions and solutions, which their own contextual experiences may not have exposed them to (Korthagen, 2010).

experiment and to innovatively risk take (Bokenko and Gantt, 2000, p. 238). As innovation is experimental and adaptable, it requires time to take effect (Dewey, 1916). The enactment and active experimentation phases afforded the CTs space for iterative exploration (Sammut, 2014). This study found that the de-privatisation of practice (Daveya and Ham, 2010) placed a spotlight upon CTs' openness for innovation. As found by Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005) this encouraged the modelling of pedagogical experimentation, which acted as a fertile landscape for transformative learning outcomes (Sammut, 2014). Contrary to the findings of Irish scholars (Clarke *et al.,* 2014; O'Grady; 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018), this CPDL model resulted in the use of less directive forms of mentoring (Taherian and Shekarchian, 2008). Through the adoption of more developmental and personalised approaches (Achinstein and Davis, 2014), CTs abandoned previously held "*judgementoring*" practices (Hobson and Maldarez, 2013, p. 89), such as pointing out areas for development and telling PSTs what they should do (Tedder and Lawy, 2009). As perceived by the CTs in this study, the freedom to practice experimentation (Attard *et al.,* 2017) and risk take through trial and error can result in rich learning for all partners (Cunningham, 2007).

Reflection (and abstract conceptualisation): Sammut (2014) asserts that "transformational learning is predicated upon critical reflection" (p. 49). As Dewey (1933) states: "we do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience" (p. 78). Because the PALAR M-CoP in this study operated a 'multiple pathway' approach, teacher reflection was magnified through cyclical enactment SP phases (Kolb, 1984; Zuber-Skerritt, 2013), at a variety of learning spaces, all of which offered explicit opportunities for reflection 'in', 'on' and 'for' mentoring practice[52] (Schön, 1987; Jordan, Carlile and Stack, 2008 cited in Chambers *et al.,*

[52] Including enactment and experimentation phases during SP and workshops with the space varying from the CoP venue, school (during and after lessons), online, and personal space.

2011). These reflective phases provided the "grit for critical reflection", which challenged CTs' mentoring practices and beliefs (Sammut, 2014, p. 49). Whilst educative learning conversations certainly offered reflection-on-action opportunities for the PST, it equally provided CTs with another pathway for '*reflection-in-action'* (Schön, 1983, 1987; Mackie, 2017) as they tailored their developing mentoring practices for the immediate situation[53] (Glassman and Erdem, 2014). As reported, such moments can prompt cognitive conflict in CTs' thinking (Cobb, Wood, and Yackel, 1990), as well as dissonance between their own expectations and self-efficacy (Wheatley, 2002). As found in this study, this can lead to questioning moments, which serve to prompt reflection and a motivation to grow (Opfer and Pedder, 2011). Additionally, as per situated cognition perspectives (Allport, 1920), the presence of a UT and / or a PST was found to help CTs to "spread" their reflective "thoughts making indirect and contextual information more available in [their] minds" (Fonseca and Garcia-Marques, 2013, p. 156). Developmental mentoring deprivatized CTs' practice (Daveya and Ham, 2010), which paved the way for PSTs to engage in active observations of their lessons. As the CT attempted to model best practice and the PSTs asked 'why' oriented questions, the CT reflected more deeply about the relationship between teaching and learning, so that they could explicate contextual practical knowledge for their PST (Whitehead and Fitzgerald, 2006)[54]. The socially cognitive interactions which generative mentoring offered

[53] Reflection on learning concersation practice was aided by CTs' engagement with and access to learning concersation criteria from the 'Learning Journey Reflection Pack: Conducting Effective Learning Conversations'. This extends Hall *et al.*'s (2018) call for PST reflection to be underpinned by criteria, to the CT experience.

[54] Though it is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is important to acknowledge that in supporting the PST to reflect-in-action, the CT also learned to reflect-in-action more proficiently themselves. As PSTs posed questions about their professional challenges, CTs were placed in positions to reflect upon aspects of pedagogical practice, which their own struggles might not have provoked (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005). As they attempted to model best practice, *"they visualize[d] what the student teachers witness[ed]*" (Weasmer and Woods, 2003, p.74).

prompted "a [deeper] change in the eyes through which [CTs and PSTs saw] the world" (Marton, Dahlgren, Svensson, and Saljo, 1977).

*'Reflection-on-mentoring'* (Schön, 1983, 1987) was demonstrated as CTs retrospectively analysed their evolving mentoring practice for the purposes of understanding (Mackie, 2017) and tracking their progress[55] (Glassman and Erdem, 2014, p. 215). In addition to the PST's presence prompting reflection-in-action, their observation of CTs' lessons also prompted reflection-on-action in the CT, as they later explained their chosen pedagogies to the PST (Weasmer and Woods, 2003; Chambers *et al.,* 2015). The concept of 'lesson study', which has been lauded as excellent 'reflection-on-action' practice (Hall *et al.,* 2018), was reversed in the example of the CT opening up their learning concersation practice to critique by their PST. Additionally, CTs returned to the community space to discuss their evolving mentoring practice (Patton and Parker, 2015) and to co-reflect on their triumphs and challenges. Consequently, further abstractions could be drawn (Girvan *et al.,* 2016), which led to inferences which can cause a change in practice and beliefs (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002). As suggested in the literature, CTs' facilitation of educative learning conversations acted as a significant vehicle for deep reflection on pedagogy (Simpson *et al.,* 2007; Crasborn *et al.,* 2010; Harrison and Lee, 2011; O'Grady, 2017), which is an important skill also for the mentor. Enacting their enhanced effective questioning skills, CTs enabled their own capacity to reflect-on-action (Bjerkholt *et al.,* 2014; Harrison *et al.,* 2005). Probing questions prompted deconstructive and reconstructive processes, which guided the CT to break down, rethink and reshape pedagogical practice, knowledge and understanding for different situations (Yeomans and Sampson 1994 cited in Mackie, 2017). This runs contrary to some situated learning

[55] Processes using reflective stimuli including: reflective journals, learning journey developmental activities, the M-CoPs 'Trello' reflection wall and pre-group tasks

theorists' claims that teachers do not engage in 'theory-level reflection' and as a result, tend to limit their thinking to the immediate situation (Hoekstra Beijaard, Brekelmans and Korthagen, 2007; Korthagan, 2010)[56].

The PALAR M-CoP model offered opportunities for *reflection-for-action*, which "promote[s] positive change in teaching [and mentoring] practices through engagement in metacognitive thinking and individuals taking responsibility for their own learning" (Mackie, 2017, p. 12). As a consequence of revisiting and critiquing their assumptions and practices in the face of disorienting experiences, CTs reflected-for-action, developing new frameworks for growth (Mezirow, 2000; Sammut, 2014). This study identifies that the educative arm of the mentoring process magnified CTs' appreciation for reflection-for-action, as they promoted and reinforced it to their PST regarding both pupil and PST growth (Schwille, 2008 cited in Mackie, 2017). Reflection-for-action was planned, structured and episodic (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) and was supported through various reflective stimuli[57]. However, the dialogic nature of the M-CoP (Van Kruiningen, 2013; Olensen and Nordentoft, 2013; Zachery, 2009) resulted in CTs co-contemplating mentoring targets for moving their practice forward (Geijsel *et al.,* 2009 cited in Scheerens and Sleeger, 2010; Sammut, 2014) in the light of their challenges (Smith *et al.,* 2010). The community's offering of alternative thinking (von Krogh, Nonaka and Aben, 2001; Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011) contributed to individuals' refinement of how next to enact mentoring targets and experiment with mentoring practice (Sammut, 2014). As CTs

[56] Though it is beyond the scope of mentoring CPDL outcomes for the mentor, it is important to highlight that by using their powerful skills of reflection facilitation (Crutcher and Naseem, 2016; Daveya and Ham, 2010), the CTs provided PSTs with a lesson on reflection on practice (Whitehead and Fitzgerald, 2006; Lai Ha, 2014). CTs prided themselves on increasingly supporting PSTs "to internalize reflective practices to guide their future teaching" (Crutcher and Naseem, 2016, p. 43), which they strongly expressed as important for PSTs becoming adaptable professionals who could reflect and function under various conditions and in a variety of contexts (Huang, Lubin and Ge, 2011).

[57] Including their 'reflective journal', 'learning journey plan', 'time-capsule' (hopes and dreams).

provided context surrounding effective mentoring practice and prompted one another to reflect on how to adapt and experiment with practices to suit their context (Geertz, 1973; Wenger, 2009; Poekert *et al.,* 2016), new stages of enactment and active experimentation were better tailored to their individual situations (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). Such applied thinking with the support of others, assists learners to grasp the impact or lack thereof (Blackstock *et al.,* 2007 cited in Trimble and Lázaro, 2014, p. 125), which serves to reinforce their efforts (Habermas, 1972; Cohen *et al.,* 2007).

This discussion theme examined how PALAR M-CoP processes could be utilized to develop three empowering CPDL pedagogies for the CT. It is proposed that the model catered for the individual CT's psychological empowerment, which is extremely important at the initial and continuing stages of a CPDL journey (Zimmerman, 2000), particularly in cases such as this one, where CPDL implementation runs contrary to tradition and status quo. This thematic discussion emphasized the high value the teachers attributed to the democratic opportunity to develop autonomously, as an individual mentor of PSTs (Poekert *et al.*, 2016). The CPDL pedagogies were effectively used to enable CTs to discover their "own wealth of knowledge" and skills as a mentor (Lewis *et al.,* 1998 cited in Ruechakul *et al.*, 2015, p. 75-76). The realisation of their expertise became more obvious to them over time (Nelson *et al.,* 1998 cited in Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout) and as their confidence and competence about their evolving practices, attitudes and beliefs about mentoring and SP grew, so did their sense of professionalism (Poekert *et al.,* 2016). As M-CoP members developed together, they came to recognise that each member's individual capabilities can empower the community (Neal, 2014; Fleming, 2016). Cultivating mentoring competencies in other community members, raised CTs' perception of themselves as mentor leaders (Poekert *et al.,* 2016). As individuals were empowered by the community, the community was empowered by their individual and

collective efforts. Such an interplay is said to bolster attempts at change (Opfer and Pedder 2011; Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015). Whilst individual empowerment is particularly important for motivational purposes (Zimmerman, 2000), as the remainder of this chapter explores, individual empowerment acts as an important motivational pre-requisite for empowerment at the organisational level, as teachers' openness to share themselves as a resource for others, is contingent upon the degree to which they feel like experts (Russell *et al.,* 2009 cited in Christens, 2012; Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016).

At this point, the reader is asked to consider the question: Is what has been put forth above enough? This thesis postulates that the answer is no. The following thematic discussion will contemplate why.

### *5.3 PALAR M-CoP and The 'Language of Critique'*

This thematic discussion aims to address the following research questions:

Table 18 Research Questions: Theme 2

| Main Research Question |
| --- |
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| 2. Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support the identification of complex barriers to growth and CPDL implementation; and if so, what are these barriers; who poses them and how do they impact CTs' growth and CPDL implementation? |

### 5.3.1 *Organisational Complexity*

This study confirms that there was quite a disparity between CTs' growth aspirations in line with the 'Guidelines on School Placement' (Teaching Council, 2013) and the harsh and rude reality (O'Grady, 2017) on the ground in schools (Hall *et al.,* 2018). CTs' drive to grow as mentors was contingent upon the degree to which they were challenged by the defensive routines presented by their environments (Argyris, 1995; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). As reminded by Poekert *et al.* (2016), the school context had the capacity to directly influence their CPDL outcomes and thus, affect the kind, and depth of growth possible for the CT. In such complex systems, there are many agents and factors, which exist and function both separately and together, to influence the generation of developmental barriers (Stollar *et al.,* 2006; Opfer and Pedder, 2011). Socially dynamic endeavours cannot ignore the fact that power is inevitably present and is exercised (Thorkildsen, 2013). Researchers and educators are criticised for acknowledging that "more complex understandings of teaching or learning" need to be adopted, whilst they themselves 'turn a blind eye' to complexity theory when designing CPDL programmes (Opfer and Pedder, 2011, p. 379). Ironically, transformative learning (Newman, 2012; Howie and Bagnall, 2013) and complexity theorists, researchers and educators (Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014) are also accused of ignoring 'critical theory' and thus, shying away from issues associated with power inequalities and politics in embedded learning (Newman, 2012; Howie and Bagnall, 2013). A failure of CPDL facilitators to recognise and account for complexity and inequality in teachers' learning contexts (Armour *et al.*, 2015) negatively influences CPDL experiences (Cochran-Smith, Ell, Ludlow, Grudnoff and Aitken, 2014) and disempowers teachers (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Cooper *et al.,* 2016) as they attempt to implement their CPDL. This theme turns the reader's attention to consider how, in

the face of seemingly insurmountable complex barriers (Argyris, 1995; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013), this same CPDL meta-model prevented mentor growth from being 'washed out' (Zeichner, 1987); capacity, quality and meaningful change from being lost (Lovett and Gilmore, 2003); and "the time and resources spent on [the PALAR M-CoP from being] wasted" (Poekert *et al.,* 2016, p. 308). This theme explicitly adopts a rarely used bi-focal lens, synthesising 'complexity theory' and 'critical theory', as recommended by Cochran-Smith *et al.,* (2014).[58] Though researchers have been accused of using complexity theory for retrospective description purposes (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), this research used complexity thinking prospectively to inform the design of transformational CPDL processes (Morrison, 2008; Cochran-Smith *et al.* 2014).

### 5.3.2 *Critical Consciousness*

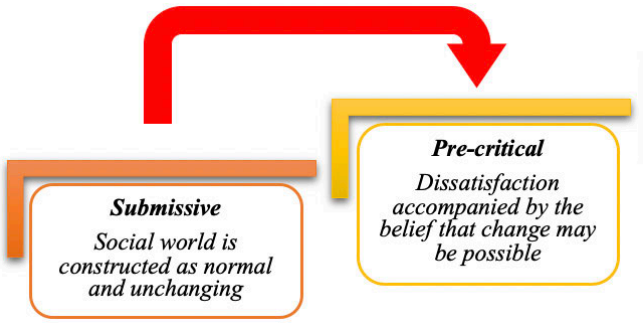
At the inception of this study, the CTs expressed exasperation (Serrano-García, 1994 cited in Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010) with the prevailing mentoring and SP culture in schools. However, PALAR processes initially unveiled a low level of 'critical motivation' to understand what hindered their progress (Watts *et al.*, 2011; Diemer *et al.,* 2017) and an attitude of "passive adaptation" and "silent acceptance of the status quo" (Carlson, Engebretson and Chamberlain, 2006, p. 837). As per Watts, Griffith and Abdul-Adil's (1999) categorisation, the CTs appeared to reside at the 'acritical stage of development', expressing feelings of powerlessness and inferiority. Although some power asymmetries and obstacles present themselves obviously, others are often well hidden (Murray, 1995). Therefore, it was

[58] Though not explicitly discussed in detail under this theme, the reader is reminded that the above drive to overcome complex barriers to CPDL implementation was pursued by adopting the three CPDL pedagogies of autonomy, social constructivism and situated experience, but from both complexity and critical theory perspectives. The same pedagogical approaches were adopted when exploring, solving and evaluating barriers to CPDL implementation through the use of PALAR processes, for example.

unfeasible to expect the CTs in this study to blindly navigate the implementation of their CPDL and indeed the SP guidelines through the socio-political minefield that was their school (Lawlor and Zachery, 2016; Diemer *et al.,* 2017). In line with participatory thinking, CPDL should provide teachers with "a platform for transcending reified cultural narratives and the passive consumption of that which is typically accepted as given or 'common sense' in their lives" (Anderson *et al.,* 2015, p.185). Achieving such an outcome however, is dependent upon teachers and in this case, the CTs, becoming more critically conscious (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010; Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015). The CPDL processes in this study actively developed a propensity in CTs to recognise and understand the power structures and relations at play in their school environment (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010; Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015). To borrow the words of Freire (1973): "the more accurately [teachers] grasp true causality" of that which hampers their growth, "the more critical their understanding of reality will be" (p. 44). Only then can those lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources and the outcomes of their CPDL (Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015). Additionally, because the CTs in this study communicated somewhat defeatist attitudes about the potential impact of CPDL, it was necessary to enhance their aptitude to critically reflect in a socio-analytical way (Diemer *et al.,* 2017). Because such thinking does not necessarily occur spontaneously (Campbell and MacPhail, 2002; Carlson *et al.,* 2006), PALAR M-CoP processes sought to facilitate CTs to problematize their situation (Glassman and Erdem, 2014) by identifying the socio-political inequalities which hampered them (Freire, 1973; Diemer *et al.,* 2017). In essence, the CPDL meta-model provided the foundations for building a 'language of critique' (Giroux, 1997; Opfer and Pedder, 2011). This was achieved through a working relationship between the three interconnected CPDL pedagogies and PALAR processes including but not limited to: 'problematization' and 'critical reflection' for change. As figure 5-5 displays, it is suggested that these model processes supported the CTs in this

study to transition from a 'submissive' level of critical consciousness to the next level of 'pre-critical' dissatisfaction' (Serrano-García, 1994, p. 10).

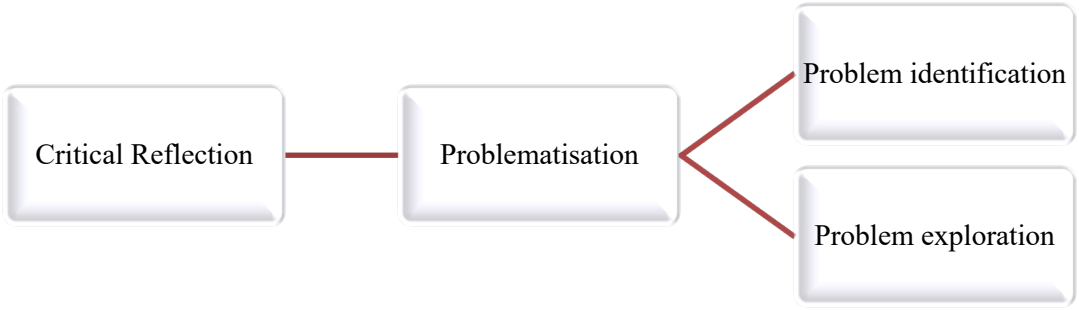
Figure 5-5 Level transcendence from 'submissive' to 'pre-critical' critical consciousness




5.3.2.1 'Problematization' through 'Critical Reflection'

Realising that they were not alone in their CPDL implementation struggles (Wenger, 2008; Saldana, 2014; O'Kelly, 2016) served to galvanise community members' growing sense of solidarity with (Saldana, 2014), responsibility for and accountability to one another (Wenger *et al.*, 2002). Empowered by a resolve to stick together in the face of individual and collective adversity (Russell *et al.*, 2009; Christens, 2012), they worked together to better recognise and understand the complex barriers (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Kearney *et al.,* 2013) obstructing their evolving practice (Louis *et al*., 1995 cited in Stoll *et al*., 2006; Zuber-Skerritt, 2013), both individually and collectively (Roschelle and Teasley, 1995; O'Kelly, 2016). In line with Freirean (1973) thinking, CTs' adeptness to move from a low level of critical consciousness to higher ones was pedagogically operationalized through engagement in critically reflective PALAR processes: 'problem identification' and 'problem exploration' (Anderson *et al.,* 2015; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). See Figure 5-6.

Figure 5-6 Critical Reflection for Change




5.3.2.2 'Problem Identification' and 'Problem Exploration'

By engaging in 'problem identification processes' such as building a 'barrier wall' (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013), CTs tapped into an emotional state, which Fleming (2012) insists is necessary for transformation to be possible. 'Stakeholder identification' proved to be an important activity for critically reflecting upon the existing levels of SP partner engagement, with respect to those who should be contributing, but who were not (Zuber-Skerrit, 2013; Chevalier Buckles, 2013), as well as examining who exactly stood in the way of their goals (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Kearney *et al.,* 2013). Deeper social analysis of the nature of problems (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016) culminated in CTs becoming increasingly more aware of that which was wrong and unfair (Diemer *et al.,* 2017).

As demonstrated, when teachers are emotionally exercised by the injustice of being stifled (Ruitenberg, 2009 cited in Mirra *et al,* 2016), they can experience a productive political agitation (Ruitenberg, 2009 cited in Mirra *et al,* 2016). Such a level of critical consciousness is key for developing critically active questioners (Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki, 1994; Carlson *et al.,* 2006), who are less likely to accept the status quo (Watts *et al.,* 1999; Carlson *et al.,* 2006).

### 5.3.3 *Complex Barriers to Transformative CPDL*

Complex systems such as schools continue to sustain a poor track record of innovating themselves as they struggle to keep up with the pace of change (Kools and Stoll, 2016; 2017). Despite the Teaching Council's (2013) attempt to reform SP, CTs' reported experiences substantiate the view that sustainable and meaningful change is complex and multi-faceted (OECD, 2015; Kools and Stoll, 2017). CTs corroborated Fullan (2015) general position, maintaining that the failure and / or superficial adoption of SP reform was reflected in the minimal alteration of other SP partners' mentoring behaviours and beliefs. This work affirms that the presentation of complex barriers was reflective of a profession which was struggling to cope with a "fairly profound change" (Ó'Ruairc, 2014, p. 5), in this case, to SP cultures, structures and relationships. With change slow and challenging (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011), CTs found that they were swimming against a strong cultural current (Gleeson *et al.,* 2012), which failed to promote or sustain their growth (Cooper *et al.,* 2016). This study also verified O'Doherty *et al.*'s (2017) concern that adequate consideration would not be given to operationalise and resource the implementation of the guidelines and the development of a partnership approach. This research provides evidence to suggest that unhelpful structures and "conditions of service [can] make mentoring" cultures (Clow, 2005, p. 2) and SP guidelines extremely challenging to embed. It is understood from CTs' perceptions, that cultural and structural challenges negatively impacted SP partners' interest in, value for and motivation to engage in mentoring and SP. As CTs' critical consciousness raised, they acknowledged that the extent to which they could apply their CPDL, or indeed cascade it to others, was largely dependent upon their relationships (Cooper *et al.,* 2016; Young and MacPhail. 2016) with SP partners. Similar to Mitleton-Kelly's (2002) assertion, the CTs in this study learned that other SP partners' decisions, actions and attitudes pertaining to SP directly affected their capacity to mentor. Their growth was circumvented by uncooperative partners' lack of support for their

efforts and unreceptivity to their attempts to be engaged by them (Cooper *et al.,* 2016; Mac Ruairc, 2016; Brennan, 2017). Each of these three barriers present "huge implications for [the] [dis]empowerment" of teachers at the organisational level (Haugaard, 2012, p. 293). Because these complex barriers interact and influence one another, directly affecting the capacity of CPDL to result in change (Yang, Watkins and Marsick, 2004; Kool and Stoll, 2017), their impact is examined in the light of one another. It is important however to emphasise that whilst the identification of barriers was an essential process in this study, *what* those barriers were is not the key concern. Therefore, the graphical summary of barriers which are presented below act merely as a means to later support the reader to understand *how* a PALAR M-CoP can empower CTs to overcame barriers, however they may present.

Figure 5-7 Breakdown of Complex Barriers to CPDL Implementation

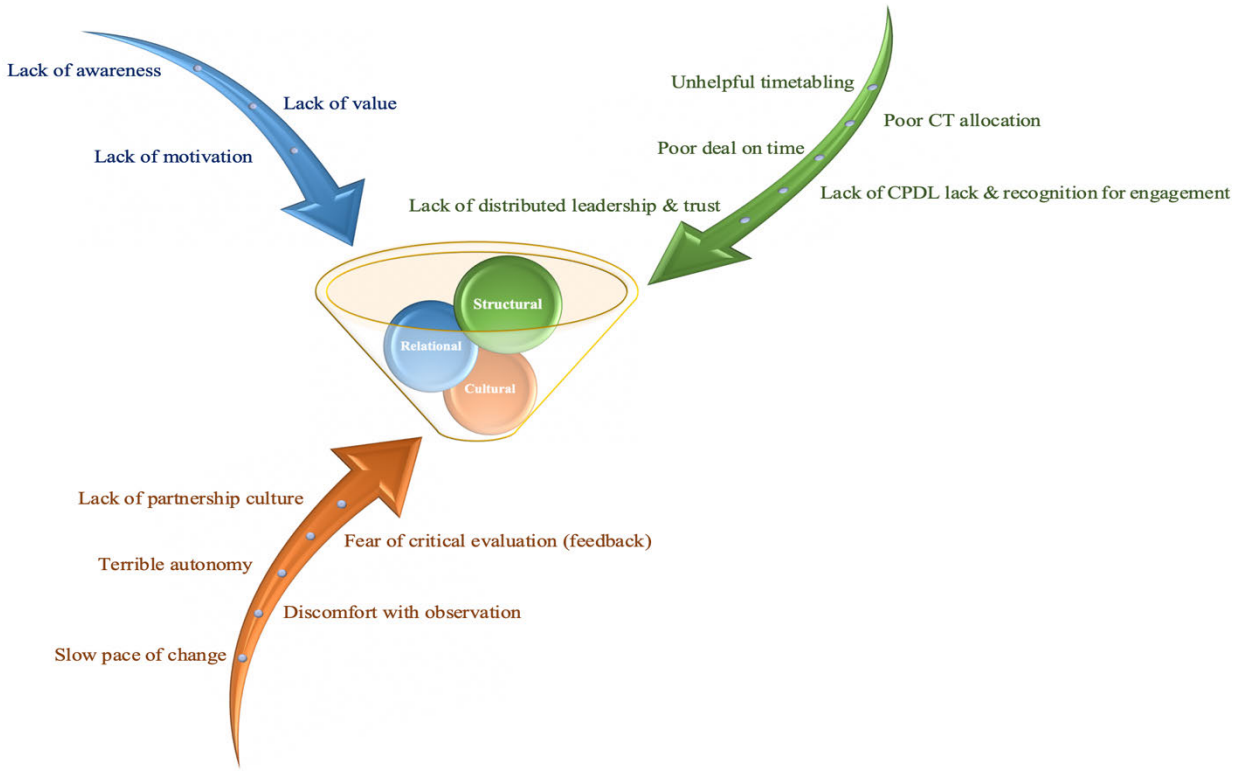
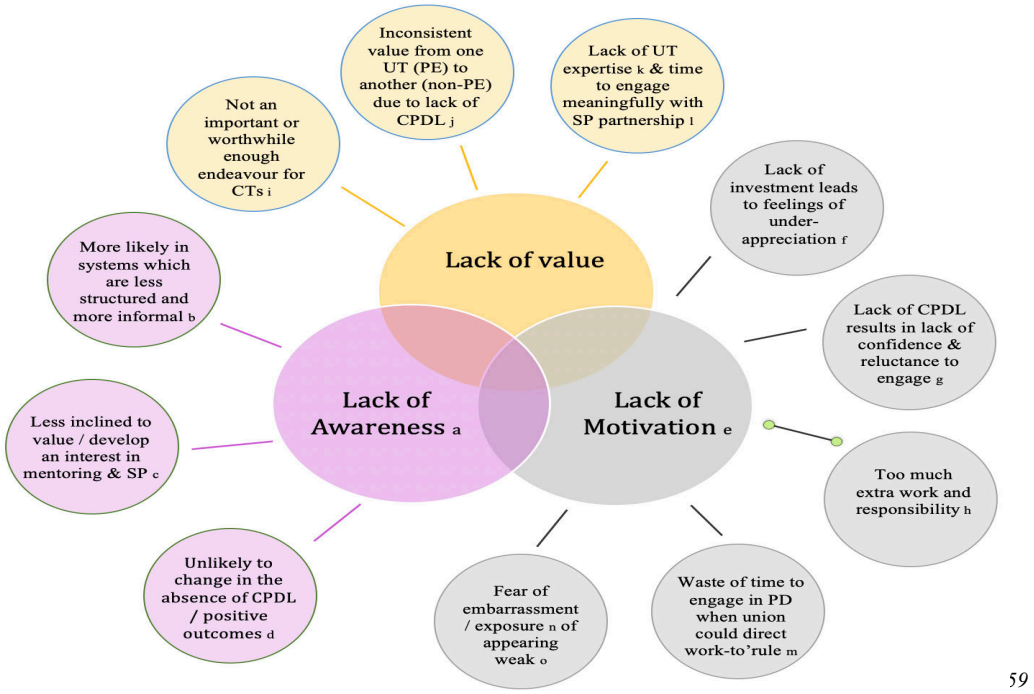


Figure 5-8 Breakdown of relational complex barriers




[59]

### 5.3.4 *Impact of Complex Barriers upon CPDL Implementation*

The degree to which a CT can develop as a mentor is reliant upon the PST's willingness to engage in the process (Young and MacPhail, 2015). This study proposes that a lack of commitment by SP partners (Bullough and Draper, 2004; Young and MacPhail, 2015) can put a strain on the mentor-mentee relationship (D'Amato and Quinn, 2002; Young and MacPhail, 2015). Whilst the reasons for SP partners' under-engagement is crucial to understand, ultimately, partners under-performance results in a lack of reinforcement of CTs' efforts, thus

[59] a As found by Simpson (2007), MacPhail (2011) and Fives *et al.* (2016); b As found by Conway *et al.* (2009); c As found by Van Ginkel *et al.* (2016); d As found by Guskey (2002); f As found by Ardts *et al.* (2010); g Sinclair, Dowson and Thistleton-Martin (2006); Young and MacPhail (2015); h Ramsey (2009); i Rosenberg and Heimberg (2009); j O'Grady (2017;) k McSharry and Mulcahy (2012); l Sugrue (2013); m Robertson (1992); Moran, (2010); n Argyris (1995); o O'Grady (2017); Colvin and Ashman (2010)

undermining their capacity to grow as mentors (Mac Ruairc, 2016 cited in Brennan, 2017; Cooper *et al.,* 2016; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). This research evinces that CTs' attempts to act as 'coach' (Clarke *et al.,* 2014; Hall *et al.,* 2018) and to develop a 'school placement model' continue to be arduous pursuits, as they are undercut by the existing 'work placement model', with its informal and unstructured approaches (Young *et al.,* 2015). It reinforces the outdated roles of SP as 'host' (Conway *et al.,* 2009; Chambers *et al.,* 2011; Kelly and Tannehill, 2012; O'Grady, 2017) and CTs as 'supervisor of practice', at best, and more commonly at worst, 'classroom placeholder' (Clarke *et al.,* 2014; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Scholars stress that school structures, as determined by school management and other agencies, can kill the conditions necessary for effectively embedding CPDL and sustaining change (Lampert, Boerst, and Graziani, 2011; Cooper *et al.,* 2016). In the case of this study, with principals determining the structures of the school, their actions and decisions or lack thereof, "heavily determine[d] what [could] and what [could not] be accomplished" (Murphy, 2015, p. 160) with respect to SP. As proposed in this study, when school management allocated the role of CT to teachers as a means to reward seniority or careerism (O'Grady, 2017), they reinforced the position of the "absentee landlord" (Clarke *et al.,* 2014, p. 167) as acceptable. Whilst their motivation may have been to provide that teacher with "free time" (Young and MacPhail, 2015, p. 228), they consequently foisted an ill-equipped CT, with a lack of sincere commitment to the role (Chambers *et al.,* 2012) upon the PST, and subsequently upon the CTs, who was expected to work in partnership with them (Teaching Council, 2013). As per the literature, there were incidences of over-delegation to the PST (Chandler, Eby and McManus, 2010) who was abandoned to "sink or swim" (Hall *et al.,* 2018, p. 27). It is suggested that the Teaching Council's (2013) guidance to "facilitate co-operating teachers [to] avail…of discretionary time while student teachers are teaching more independently" (p. 20) failed to acknowledge how cultural difficulties might lead to structures being abused and relationships being strained. As

indicated in this study, the culture of unproductive levels of autonomy (OECD, 1991; Sugrue, 2002; Mac Ruairc, 2010), professional isolation (Teaching Council, 2010a; O'Sullivan, 2011; O'Grady, 2017) and individualism prevails (Hargreaves, 1994; Stoll *et al.,* 2006). Reflecting a common pattern in the literature, this research verifies that other CTs' reluctance to embrace and reinforce critical inquiry and reflection (Sugrue, 2012; Coolahan, 2003) with their PST was attributed to a historical inexperience and / or negative experience with teacher and peer evaluation practices, at both the school (OECD, 2006, 2009; Teaching Council, 2010a) and inspectorate levels (Hogan *et al.,* 2007; Ó'Ruairc, 2014). This work emphasises a somewhat underexplored consideration of power and politics which heighten teachers' anxieties surrounding evaluation and critical reflection processes (Cushion, 2018). A culture of competition (O'Grady, 2017) and consequent knowledge hoarding (Gillespie, 2009) also contributed to other CTs' reluctance to place their practice on show for PSTs and UTs (Rosenholtz, 1991; Duncombe and Armour, 2004), as well as an unwillingness to impose their judgments on another professional's practice (Hogan *et al.*, 2007; OECD, 2009). As proposed by Young and MacPhail (2015), progress on these issues was deterred by a lack of CT preparation by partnership universities, in this case for non-PE CTs and non-PE UTs. It is perceived that the dearth of CPDL opportunities compounded SP partners' insecurity and sense of apprehension about the role (Dunning *et al.,* 2011; Young and MacPhail, 2015) and in particular, about observing, providing feedback and engaging in learning conversations (Sugrue, 2003; Clarke *et al.,* 2014). Further resistance to and cynicism surrounding such practices was said to peak with the publication of the Teaching Council (2011) 'Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers', which, when operated can result in potentially legal sanctions for teachers (Delvaux *et al.,* 2013; Tornero and Taut, 2010; Reddy *et al.,* 2016). In addition, this work affirms Gleeson's (2014) warning that "evolution will face strong resistance from the status quo including teacher unions" (p. 14). Colleagues who were reluctant to fully engage

had the support of a union position which was somewhat unsupportive of the observation and evaluation processes of mentoring (Gassner, 2010). Though this issue has been addressed somewhat, it is suggested that the Teaching Council (2013) failed to fully appreciate "the extent to which that culture of resistance and resentment simply simmers below the surface of cordial relations" (Sugrue, 2012, p. 100). It should be acknowledged also that the 'age of austerity' impacted overwhelmingly upon managements' priorities and upon teachers' working conditions and terms (ASTI, 2016). As such, colleagues had begun to display a reduction of goodwill and volunteerism (ASTI, 2016; O'Flaherty and McCormack, 2019). CTs agreed with Mulcahy and McSharry's (2012) assessment that "against the backdrop of fluid contracts and limited resources, schools are increasingly ill-equipped to take on student teachers for current placement requirements, never mind on extended placements" (p. 99). This work also indicated that during times of economic and promotional constraints on the profession, colleagues perceive one another to be potential competitors (Gillespie, 2009; Hall *et al.* 2018). In this case, colleagues' disengagement and lack of support for the CTs' efforts was attributed to a deliberate intention not to give them a promotional advantage (Gillespie, 2009).

Regardless of partners' reasons for under-conformity, the CTs found it challenging to formally observe their PST; to encourage their PST to observe them; to provide feedback and to facilitate the PST to critically reflect (Teaching Council, 2013), as recommended by the Teaching Council (2013), when many of their colleagues engaged in such practices infrequently, and still approached their role in an informal and unstructured way (Conway *et al.,* 2009; O'Grady, 2017). Ultimately, this sent confusing messages to PSTs about the nature of professional relationships and practice, which conflicted with and undermined CTs' efforts to develop a mentoring relationship (Mitleton-Kelly, 2002). It is believed that such inconsistencies particularly cause relational tensions with PSTs who are already reluctant and who do not take

the CT role seriously (D'Amato and Quinn, 2002; Young and MacPhail, 2015). Under these circumstances, CTs were sometimes faced with the adoption of 'defensive routines' (Argyris, 1995). "Face saving" for fear of embarrassment or a threat of exposure also led to PSTs' attempts to by-pass full engagement (Argyris, 1995, p. 21)[60] and a lack of resilience in the face of critique resulted in dismissive and / or defensive reactions (Achinstein and Davis, 2014).

This research verified that PSTs' potential commitment to engage in the mentoring relationship was further subverted by UTs, particularly non-PE UTs, who failed to communicate and interact meaningfully or to invest adequate time to the development of a partnership approach (Cullimore and Simmons, 2010)[61]. This work affirms that hierarchical power relations continue to be the greatest challenge to the triad relationship (Smyth, 1986 cited in Veal and Rickard, 1996), with CTs feeling insulted by and / or taken for granted by UTs and the partnership university (Cullimore and Simmons, 2010; Colvin and Ashman, 2010). The power optics can result in their context specific advice being ignored by the PST (Young and MacPhail, 2015) in favour of the UT's, who formally assesses the PST (Anderson *et al.,* 2012). CTs disclosed that, in such cases, being side-lined to the "periphery of the supervisory process", they struggled to apply their mentoring CPDL (Young and MacPhail, 2015, p. 231).

Echoing past complaints within the profession, a proper agreement on time (Sugrue, 1995) was not initially negotiated between staff and management, despite the duration of SP being extended from 100 to 200 hours (Teaching Council, 2013). Not being afforded the necessary protected time to fulfil guideline responsibilities significantly hampered the CTs' capacity to

[60] A reaction shared by some other CTs

[61] The reader is reminded that, though it was not a part of this study, the PE-UTs received CPDL which informed them about the study and which supported them to understand how to work in partnership with engaged CT and how to engage reluctant or uncooperative CTs.

grow as mentors and to fulfil their role (Veeramah, 2012; O'Grady, 2017). As reported previously (O'Grady, 2017), in a couple of cases, the CTs' principals demonstrated a lack of trust in some non-PE staff to engage appropriately. In subsequently refusing to facilitate a PST on such grounds, the participation and development of two CTs was cut short as they were not allocated a PSTs with whom to apply their learning. Such a structural decision makes situated learning impossible (Zachery, 2009). Moreover, a lack of value for mentoring and SP was demonstrated by school management making unhelpful timetabling decisions which made mentoring more challenging to organise (O'Grady, 2017). Limited tangible leadership support (Mullen, 2010) was also evidenced through the CT being assigned extra work, because they were deemed to have a "lighter timetable" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 134). With limited time to engage in CPDL (Teaching Council, 2016) and feeling overwhelmed by the increased expectation of the role (Teaching Council, 2013), CTs resented the lack of acknowledgement for their PALAR M-CoP engagement. They were particularly agitated by being forced or expected to participate in 'Croke Park Hour' legitimate activities, which they and their union perceived to be an "unproductive…poor use of time" (Ed Byrne cited in ASTI, 2016, p. 12).

As previously indicated, CTs' growth was challenged by SP partners' under-conformity with the SP guidelines (Cooper *et al.,* 2016; Mac Ruairc, 2016; Brennan, 2017). Evidence qualifies the Teaching Council director's concerns that some colleagues would not be open to, or willing to adapt their practices, to align with the guidelines (Ó'Ruairc, 2015a). This work proposes that being acutely aware of colleagues' suspicion and resistance to recent changes (Locke *et al.,* 2013), led to a sense of insecurity and anxiety about attempting to exert their influence on SP partners (Neal, 2014). CTs shared Girvan *et al.*'s (2016) experience, that in Ireland, invitations to collaborate can be perceived as an imposition and in doing so, they would be "sticking their neck out" (p. 137). Though the principal is tasked with promoting a whole-school approach (Teaching Council, 2013), their unwillingness to organise whole school CPDL for acting CTs

galvanised for staff that SP was not a priority (Young and MacPhail, 2015; Bullough and Draper, 2004). Principals' prioritisation of SP CPDL may have been hampered by the fact that principals were less inclined to support engagement in SP CPDL during an era of unprecedented austerity (O'Grady, 2017). Similarly, as previously reported, during such times, political unrest can result in teachers' unions sending out a protective clarion to cease all 'voluntary activities' and to "work-to-rule" (Moran, 2010, p. 5). This has always been detrimental to teacher learning (Robertson, 1992). It is argued that ignoring the professional needs to teachers (Stevenson, 2014) was "at the expense of broader educational interests" (Poole, 2000, p. 94) and at the expense of the growth of the CTs.

Though CTs in this community may have been eager to share their expertise with SP partners in order to engage them, partners' acknowledgement and response to the authority of the CTs depended on whether their right to power was perceived to be legitimate (Gordon, 2009). Principals failure to tap into the expertise which was being developed by the CTs symbolically undermined (Cooper *et al.,* 2016) the CTs' status as "legitimate knowers" (McNiff, 2013, p. 6). Perceiving that their voice was not valued (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; O'Grady, 2017; Caena, 2014), CTs' confidence to appeal to others was lowered (Neal, 2014). This was compounded by the fact that PE teachers already tend to suffer from a perceived low subject status (Anicich *et al.*, 2016). Having dealt with sarcasm and a lack of respect from colleagues (Hardy, 1997 cited in Christodoulou, 2011, p. 4), the likelihood of them approaching colleagues was diminished. As this study shares, this culture, combined with a difficulty in finding colleagues who would value their interest and with whom they could discuss their evolving mentoring practices (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; O'Grady, 2017; Caena, 2014) results in experiences of professional isolation at school (Teaching Council, 2010a; O'Sullivan, 2011; O'Grady, 2017). This study found that some specialist subject teachers, like the CTs in this

study, are more isolated by the physical separation they experience due to their specialist work spaces (Andrew *et al.,* 2014; Lux, 2010), as well as their time commitment to extracurricular roles (Richards and Templin, 2012; Andrew *et al.,* 2014).

Though university school partnership development is widely regarded as important (EU, 2008 cited in Harford and O'Doherty, 2016) and a degree of theoretical readiness has been increasingly expressed (Harford and O'Doherty, 2016), evidence from this study reinforces O'Grady's (2017) suggestion that there is a gap between the Teaching Council's aspirations and the reality of what the profession is culturally, structurally and relationally prepared to do. As highlighted by Girvan *et al.* (2016): "at a time of radical educational reform", teachers' can be faced with "seemingly insurmountable barriers to change" (p. 138). Indeed, this work shines a light on the fact that, in the absence of a shared cultural vision, adequate structural support and collaborative relationships (Cooper *et al.,* 2016), CTs' motivation and capacity to persevere in their attempts at growth can be adversely affected (Poekert *et al.,* 2016).

As recommended by scholars (Howie and Bagnall, 2013; Wermke, 2010), this research engaged CTs in the problematisation of what stood in the way of them and transformative CPDL outcomes. In doing so, the adopted model acknowledged and addressed that "challenges are inherent to the change process" (Poekert *et al.,* 2016, p. 323) and that the status quo cannot be confronted unless these challenges are identified (Watts *et al.,* 1999; Carlson *et al.,* 2006). It is believed that this process roused in CTs a sense of malcontentment (Serrano-García, 1994 cited in Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010) and politically constructive anger (Ruitenberg, 2009 cited in Mirra *et al,* 2016). The critical theory perspective adopted by this model however, prompts a consideration of the risks which such a process inherently carries. Advancing a sharper aptitude for socio-political critical analysis can overwhelm teachers about

the colossal task of embedding their CPDL in schools, consequently, diminishing their sense of political efficacy and critical motivation to challenge the status quo (Watts *et al.,* 2011). Worse still, it can reinforce low expectations of CPDL potential (Cordingley, 2015a; 2016), with poor outcomes leading to teachers' disenfranchisement (McMillan *et al.,* 2016; Hendriks and Scheerens, 2010) and reduced commitment to engage again (McMillan *et al.,* 2016). Therefore, this research promotes the necessity for CPDL models to balance a fluency in the 'language of critique' with a 'language of possibility' (Shotter and Gustavsen, 1999). The following discussion focus considers how a PALAR M-CoP can be used to assist in the counteraction of the potentially negative effects of 'learned helplessness', by actively nurturing a sense of 'learned hopefulness' (Zimmerman, 1990, 2012). The theories of 'hope' and of 'empowerment' were used to drive PALAR processes to this end (Snyder, 2003).

### *5.4 PALAR M-CoP and The Language of Possibility*

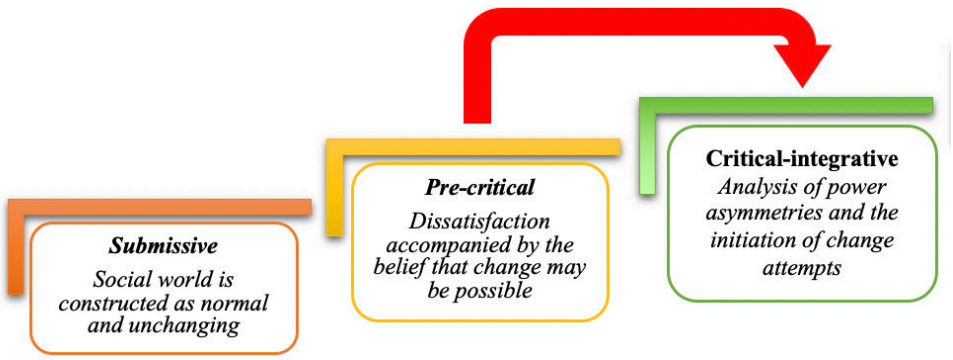
This thematic discussion aims to address the main research question and to partially address formal research question three:

Table 19 Research Questions: Theme 3

| Main Research Question |
| --- |
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| 2. Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support the identification of complex barriers to growth and CPDL implementation; and if so, what are these barriers; who poses them and how do they impact CTs' growth and CPDL implementation? |

As indicated, this study draws attention to how the enhancement of teachers' critical consciousness can result in them seeing their world through a negative analytical lens (Mirra *et al.*, 2016). As Sparkes *et al.* (1990) assert, being aware of the complex barriers, but unaware of how to overcome them, "is rather like being placed in a boxing ring with both hands tied behind your back" (p. 23). This is very true of teachers like those in this study, who already held feelings of futility about the potential outcomes of their CPDL at the organisational level (Sparkes *et al.,* 1990; Watts *et al.,* 2011). Processes underpinned by critical theory facilitated the CTs in this study to engage in a "kind of critical thinking that involves a disengagement from the tacit assumptions of discursive practices and power relations to exert more control over" the outcome of their CPDL engagement (Fleming, 2012, p. 1). Using 'critical theory', this discussion theme explores how engagement in a PALAR M-CoP may be utilized to facilitate CTs to transition from a high level of 'pre-critical' consciousness to a low level of 'critical-integrative' consciousness (Serrano-García, 1994), as illustrated below.

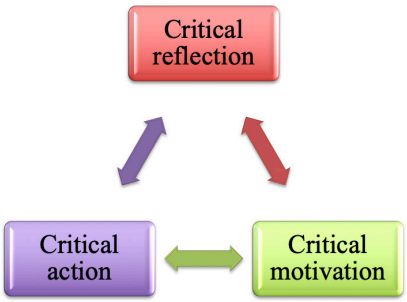
Figure 5-9 Level transcendence from 'pre-critical' to 'critical-integrative' critical consciousness




Such transcendence prompts a greater critical motivation: to analyse power asymmetries; acknowledge them as unfair; and initiate a design plan for acting upon them (Dworski-Digg and Day-Langhout, 2010). Depending upon the processes used to reflect upon and cope with power boundaries, challenges can act as "a productive tension, rather than a barrier,

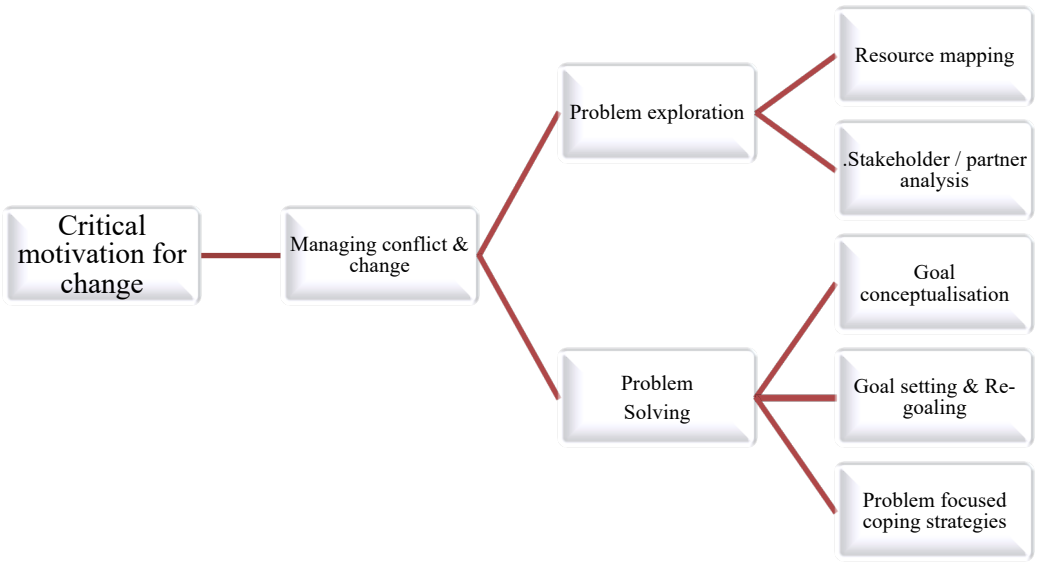
contributing to the development of persistence and stamina when addressing dilemmas" (Poekert *et al.,* 2016, p. 323). Taking this step can inspire the perception that change *may* be on the horizon (Serrano-García, 1994; Dworski-Digg and Day-Langhout, 2010). As illustrated below, this theme addresses Diemer *et al.*'s (2017) query about whether 'critical motivation' follows critical reflection and precedes 'critical action'.

Figure 5-10 Cycle for Critical Change




PALAR M-CoP processes were proven to support a 'transitive' safe space where 'critical reflection' and the planning phase of 'critical action' could grow in tandem (Freire, 1973, 1993; Diemer *et al.,* 2017). Indeed, attempts to apply new learning can be threatening and challenging (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). Whilst the school can offer the expressions of difference required for growth, teachers also need expressions of support in spaces which offer psychological safety (Sanford, 1966; Kegan, 1994 cited in Kolb and Kolb, 2005). As hope theorists state, developing teachers' learned hopefulness first depends upon their capacity to: "(1) clearly conceptualize goals [and] (2) develop the specific strategies to reach those goals (pathways thinking)" (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, and Feldman, 2003, p. 122). This was facilitated in this study through the PALAR processes of: 'problem exploration'; planning for 'problem solving' (goal setting and re-goaling) and 'evaluation (continuous)' (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013).

Figure 5-11 Cycle for Critical Change




### 5.4.1 *Problem Exploration and Solving:*

As was true of this study, transformative learning outcomes are reliant upon the teachers' ability to overcome the 'disorienting dilemmas' presented by their complex systems (Taylor and Laros, 2014). Interactive PALAR activities[62] facilitated the M-CoP to work collaboratively and interdependently to develop the problem solving mindset (Draper *et al.*, 2011; Nies and Sauer, 2012 cited in Fricke, 2013; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Trimble and Lázaro, 2014) required to co-construct solutions to emerging, complex problems (Wenger, 2009; Smith *et al.,* 2010; MacKenzie *et al.,* 2012; Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). CTs were empowered by the community (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). In the organisational absence of a supportive 'critical hardware', the PALAR M-CoP proved to be useful for enhancing CTs' 'coping intelligence' (Srivastava and Tang, 2015). In doing so, they developed 'problem-focused coping' strategies (Carver *et al.,* 1989; Srivastava and Tang, 2015). It is neither possible nor advisable to explore all potential complex problems that might exist (Mitleton-

[62] For example, 'Problem tree: Cause and effect', 'Negotiation Fair' and 'Sabotage'.

Kelly, 2002). This was especially important for CTs in this study, who identified complex barriers, which varied in nature and were posed by multiple partners. The PALAR M-CoP processed this threat by facilitating CTs to prioritise those problems, which were obstructive but potentially manageable (e.g. 'pile sorting' and the 'problem tree') (Kearney *et al.,* 2013). Borrowing and adapting Kauffman's (2000) concept of the 'adjacent possible' (p. 142), CTs explored the 'adjacent problem', whereby slightly more imminent complex problems were considered, whilst others were left until later. The indefinite expandability of the adjacent problem was made possible (Kauffman 2000; Mitleton-Kelly, 2002) by the cross-school composition of the CoP. Though conscious of the macro potential complexities, CTs focused upon "where they [were], at the time they [were at]", as they identified barriers which they wished to target (Thorkildsen, 2013, p. 31).

As they co-reflected upon managing conflict and change processes (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013), they engaged in the process of 'resource mapping' and partner identification (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). Having become emotionally engaged, they asked 'who is responsible?' as well as: 'who might be helpful to us in reaching our targets?' (Carlson *et al.,* 2006). Through 'stakeholder' analysis, CTs determined the social resources at their disposal who shared their values and held a degree of power (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2016; Ruechakul *et al.*, 2015). Concurring with the work of Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe (2011), such processes helped to arm the CTs with an arsenal of solutions for setting targets to overcome resistance and inertia, and in so doing, raised their perception that they may be able to influence their CPDL outcomes (Watts *et al.,* 2011).

### 5.4.2 *Goal Setting and Re-Goaling (evaluation [ongoing])*

This thesis proposes that without a complexity approach to goal-setting and re-goaling (Snyder *et al.,* 2003), "change efforts" cannot be initiated and 'critical-integrative' consciousness cannot be fully reached (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010, p. 216). Whilst the process of target setting may be considered to be a mere intention for achieving change, it paves the way for engagement in personalised authentic problem solving activities in real life situations (Catalano, 2015). Indeed, a "situative perspective on change processes" is said to allow for the "final concrete working-outs" of complex problems, which makes change more likely to conceive of (Van Kruiningen, 2013, p. 119). As with mentoring goals, engagement with the same reflective tools and generation of artefacts helped CTs to bridge the transition from 'critical co-reflection' to planning for 'critical action'. By discussing problems and their solutions and by setting goals to overcome complex barriers, CTs were identifying "asymmetries as oppressive" and were "demanding change" (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010, p. 216). In doing so, CTs were transitioning not only towards 'critical action' but they were also beginning to display behaviours associated with the highest level of critical consciousness: 'liberation' (Watts *et al.,* 1999; Carlson *et al.,* 2006; Serrano-García, 1994). As the study progressed, evidence was provided to accept that CTs' consciousness and growing identification as teacher leaders, led to them feeling more optimistic about their CPDL prospects (Cooper *et al.,* 2016), thus: becoming more fluent in the 'language of possibility' (Cooper *et al.,* 2016).

At this juncture, the reader is prompted one final time to consider the question: is this enough? This thesis suggests that the answer is still 'no'. Though not under-estimating the

importance of a bilingual fluency in the languages of 'critique' and 'possibility', this research proposes that taking up the responsibility of 'critical action for change' (Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki, 1994; Carlson *et al.,* 2006) is particularly challenging for teachers, in the absence of a 'critical hardware' for change (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) at the organisational and partnership levels. Therefore, it is put forth that being empowered at organisational and partnership levels and reaching a 'liberating' level of critical consciousness is unachievable unless the CPDL model develops one final fluency in the 'language of leadership (Poekert *et al.,* 2016) for empowerment and change'. It is proffered that the CPDL model in this study not only inspired teachers with a greater impetus for initiating critical change (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010, p. 216), its processes also constructed a transitive empowerment bridge to facilitate CTs to cross the threshold as mentor 'leaders' (Poekert *et al.,* 2016) by using flexible software processes (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) and tools for social change" and empowerment (Smith *et al.,* 2010, p. 1117).

## *5.5 Language of Leadership for Empowerment and Change*

This thematic discussion aims to address the following research questions:

Table 20 Research Questions: Theme 4

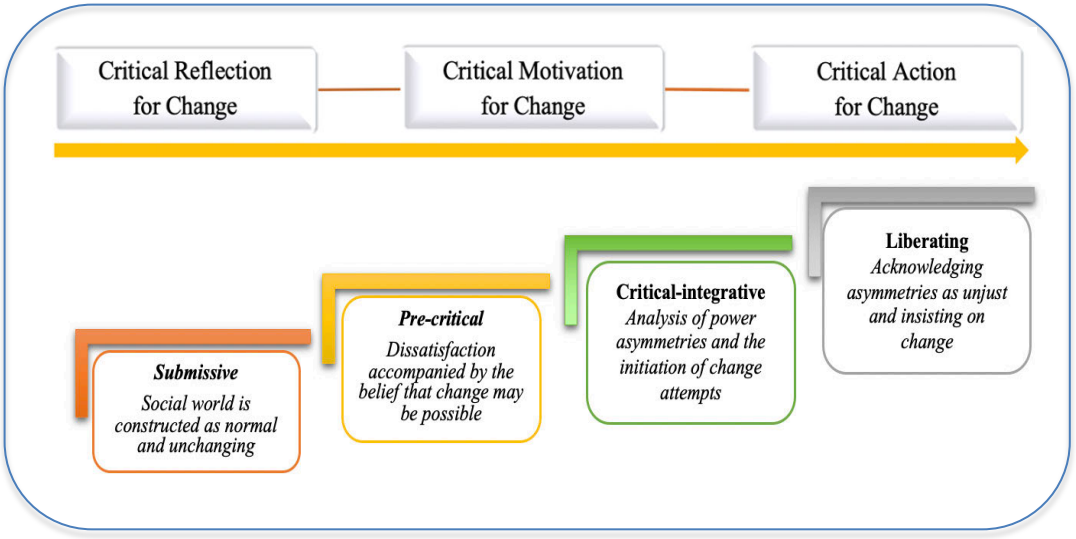
| Main Research Question |
| --- |
| *"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| Formal Research Questions |
| 3. Can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support CTs to alleviate complex barriers to mentor growth and CPDL implementation; and empower them to overcome such barriers and if so, how? |

### 5.5.1 *Introduction*

Thus far, this discussion explored how the meta-model in this study side-stepped the trap of underestimating the complex difficulties, which teachers face in understanding organisational change (Cooper *et al.,* 2016, p. 105) and in implementing their CPDL (Fullan 1999; Sahlberg 2012; King, 2016). However, this final thematic discussion broaches what much of the transformative learning theory research and CPDL models have failed to. It addresses underexplored and unfocused conceptualisations of power and politics in embedded CPDL (Newman, 2012; Howie and Bagnall, 2013). It also considers a neglected topic in CPDL literature: the relationship between critical consciousness and empowerment (Watts *et al.,* 2011). This work proposes that in the absence of a 'language of leadership' for change and empowerment, the two afore-discussed fluencies fall short of supporting CPDL implementation, teacher growth and meaningful change. The meta-model in this research

adopted the "understanding [that] the phenomenology of change aligns with an acknowledgement of human agency which sees teachers having the capacity and the power to bring change despite the structures [and cultures] within which they operate" (King, 2016, p. 590) as well as the added complexities of various relationships. Filling a gap in the literature, this study attempted to trace the challenging CPDL journey embarked upon by CTs, in what was perceived to be an inherently hierarchical and bureaucratic power structure (Nugus, Greenfield, Travaglia and Braithwaite. 2012). It is believed that PALAR processes helped CTs to cope with change and adopt strategies for coping with that which is new and challenging (Glenn *et al.,* 2012). As indicated by the findings, the CPDL meta-model rejected the traditional perspectives of organisational empowerment, which see the upper echelons of the hierarchy bestowing power upon those deemed lower, through top down methods (Matthews, 2003 cited in Eljaaidi, 2016). Instead of being dismissed as powerful players in their own empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996; Uzunbacak, 2015) and waiting in hope for socio-structural empowerment to be gifted to them by management (Spreitzer, 1996; Uzunbacak, 2015; Eljaaidi, 2016), the CTs in this study, to varying degrees, sought to seize power for themselves as mentor leaders. This work highlights the rich potential of embracing this challenge, not as a complication, but as an empowerment opportunity for the teacher, the school (Poekert *et al.,* 2016) and the school-university partnership. Utilising various PALAR processes, CTs engaged in "enactment of power" cycles (Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2011, p. 16-17) which enabled them to convert their 'critical reflection' and 'critical motivation' to 'critical action for change', ultimately transitioning them from the 'critical integrative' level of critical consciousness to the 'liberating' level (Serrano-García, 1994), the positive linear relationship of which is illustrated below in Figure 5-12.

Figure 5-12 Linear Relationship between the Critical for Critical Change and the Levels of Critical Consciousness

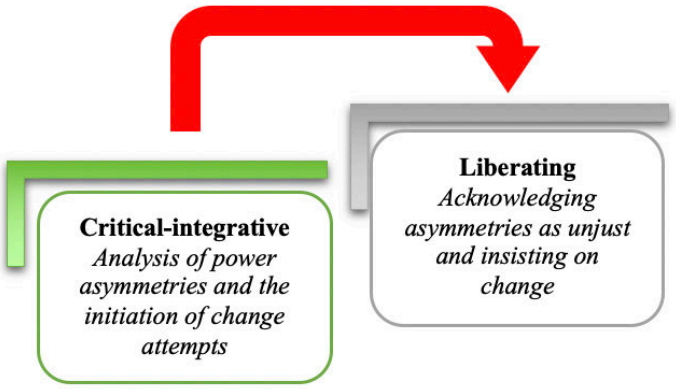



### 5.5.2 *'Power of Enactment Cycles' for Organisational Change and Empowerment*

What appears to set the PALAR M-CoP model apart from those previously criticised (Opfer and Peddar, 2011; Howard, 1998 cited in Kalles and Ryan, 2015), is not that it "pays…attention…to the situated nature of professional learning, which is variously limited, partial or absent" (Boylan *et al.,* 2018, p. 133), but that it also applies a complexity and critical theory perspective to it. This study already offered that the community dimension of the PALAR M-CoP was helpful for facilitating CTs to co-plan for and critically reflect upon critical actions for empowerment and change in their schools (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010, p. 216). However, it is argued that the daily power struggles (Nugus, Greenfield, Travaglia and Braithwaite, 2012), productive tensions (Thorkildsen, 2013; Poekert *et al.,* 2016) and "disorienting dilemmas" (Taylor and Laros, 2014, p. 139), which the real world has to offer, provided the direct and deliberate opportunity to face implementation complexities (Nugus *et al.,* 2012). Through engagement in transformative processes such as

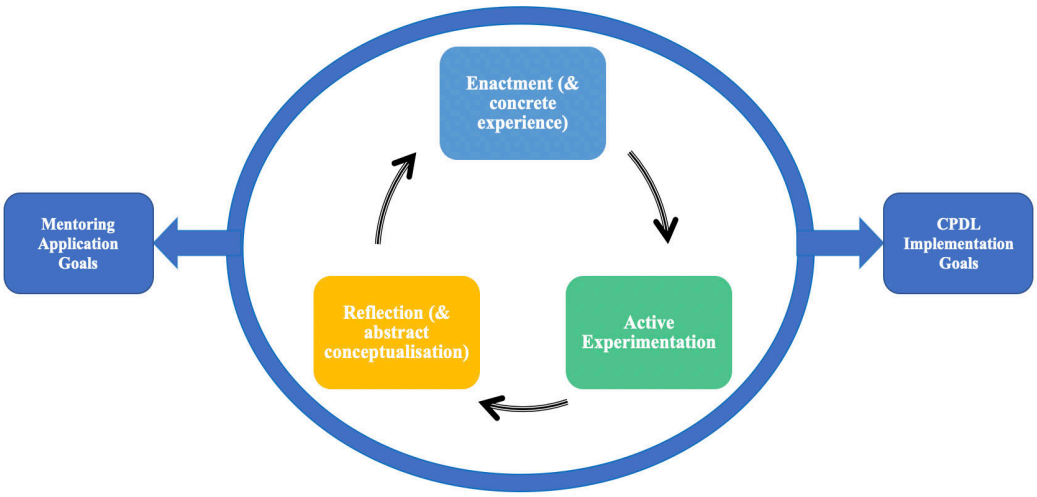
conflict management, change management, presentation, celebration and evaluation (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013), CTs transcended from the 'critical-integrative' level of consciousness to the liberated level (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010, p. 216).

Figure 5-13 Level transcendence from 'critical-integrative' critical consciousness to 'liberated'




By executing direct and deliberate critical actions to overcome complex barriers (Nugus *et al.,* 2012; Poekert *et al.,* 2016), CTs were engaging in the "enactment of power" (Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2011, p. 16-17) and as such, acting "upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1972, p. 28). As previously discussed, the 'enactment, active experimentation and reflection' feature of CPDL meta-model (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002) facilitated teachers' identity growth as mentors (Lampert *et al.* 2011 cited in Cooper *et al.*, 2016; Poekert *et al.,* 2016). However, the reader is reminded that the same CPDL pedagogies were applied to CTs' drive to implement their CPDL and to overcome complex barriers as identified below.

Figure 5-14 'Power of enactment' cycles for mentoring application and CPDL implementation




Whilst this thematic discussion will not repeat a description of the CPDL pedagogical approaches or the three elements of the above cycle[63], it is important to note that by applying the CPDL pedagogies to concentrate upon implementation problems and solutions, CTs' pattern of focus expanded from mentoring goals alone to complex leadership goals. This demonstrated their growing 'change-agency' (King, 2016; 2014) as mentor leaders and the PALAR M-CoP's increasing functionality as a change-oriented network (Lawlor, 2015). The iterative experiential interplay between the organisation and community provided PALAR M-CoP members with adequate time to witness the results of their critical actions for change (Watts *et al.,* 2011). 'Feedback loops' (Haggis, 2008 cited in Rahman *et al.,* 2014) and treating the re-analysis of barriers as a short and long term process enabled CTs to see that critical action will not always yield the desired outcomes (Watts *et al.,* 2011). As is to be discussed, though not all experiences in this study resulted in immediate change (Dewey, 1933 cited in Girvan *et al.,* 2016), failure to overcome adversity offered a different opportunity for growth,

[63] Though an example of how the processes were transferred to the reflection 'in', 'on' and 'for' 'CPDL implementation goals is provided in Appendix U should the reader like to refresh their memory of the processes.

as it elicited a deeper understanding of the stifling challenges and environmental complexities at play (Zimmerman, 2000).

### 5.5.3 *'Power' and the 'Language of Leadership'*

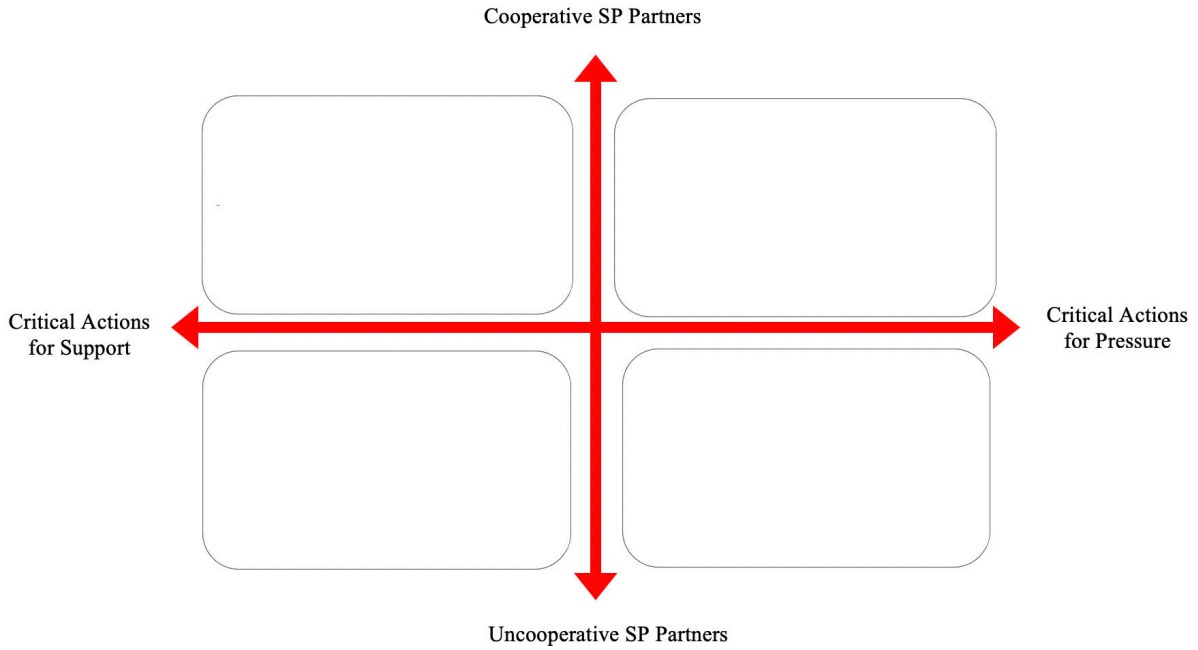
It is proposed that the CPDL model in this study unveiled for CTs what they had the power to achieve (Rye, 2015) as mentor leaders. Building on the work of power scholars[64], this discussion explores the PALAR M-CoP's adoption of a particular philosophical perspective of power as an 'agency concept' (Lukes, 1977). Such thinking interprets "having power" (Oppenheim, 1981 cited in Pansardi, 2012) as having an ability or capacity to act (Allen, 1999; Galiè and Farnworth, 2019; Pansardi, 2012). Pansardi (2012) distinguishes between "power to as ability" and "power to as ableness" (p. 78). Whilst empowerment at the individual and community levels was shown to enhance CTs' mentoring 'ability', Pansardi (2015) urges that the 'ableness' to act successfully in the "opportunity context" plays a greater role in organisational empowerment (p. 79). As promoted by critical theorists, critical "actions and behaviours may vary according to the degree of connectivity between different individuals, as well as with time and context" (Mitleton-Kelly, 2002, p. 17). In particular, the analysis of social conditions was fruitful for recognising the attribution of power (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013)[65] and for distinguishing where SP partners might sit on the cooperation continuum e.g.

[64] Scholars include: Isaacs (1987); Oppenheim (1981); Allen (1999); Thomas (2011); Pansardi 2012; Rye (2015); Galiè and Farnworth (2019).

[65] Achieved through PALAR process activities such as 'constraint analysis' and 'stakeholder analysis' (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013).

cooperative to uncooperative and powerful to powerless stakeholders (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013).

Figure 5-15 Power-Cooperation Continuum



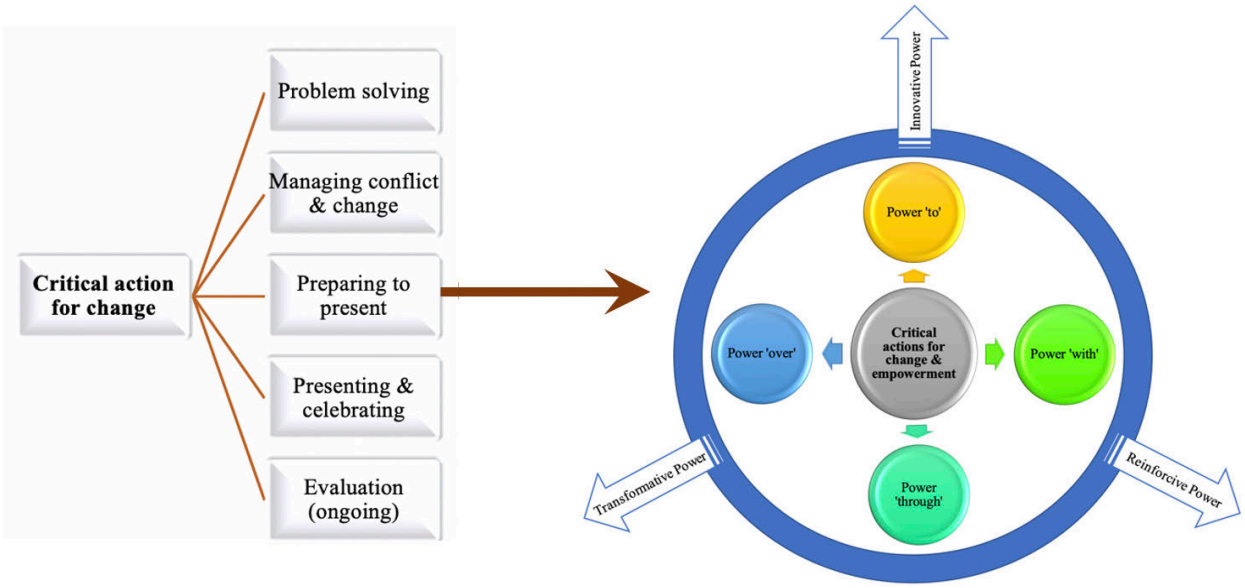

The following examination considers how engagement in enactment of power cycles and PALAR processes resulted in the selection of critical actions for change and empowerment which balanced: 1) the offering of support to enable and empower cooperative and powerful SP partners; with 2) the application of pressure to influence uncooperative SP partners, as appropriate. It is proposed that perceived success regarding empowerment and / or change can be attributed less to the sophistication of the mentor leadership strategies and more to do with exercising a measured and strategic approach to identifying the right action, at the right time, for the right relationship (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Coolahan, 1995). It is indicated that these skills of pragmatism, caution and diplomacy (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011; Christens, 2012) are required when attempting to influence others to engage. As found in this study, such 'ableness' is paramount for striking a "sophisticated balance between pressure and

support" (Coolahan, 1995, p. 12) and thus preventing an outright rejection of one's attempts to enlist significant others.

### 5.5.4 *Power Modes, Types and the Balancing Impact of Support and Pressure*

It is propounded that the process of identifying barriers to CPDL enhances CTs' intellectual capacity to comprehend and empathise with the emotional state, perspectives (Bailey, Henry and von Hippel, 2008 cited in Taylor and Cranton, 2013), and behaviours (Morse *et al.,* 1992 cited in Taylor and Cranton, 2013) of SP partners. This, mixed with their desire to "secure [their] preferred outcomes and get others to go along with" them (Rye, 2015, p. 311), resulted in CTs contemplating ethics in the wielding of power. As a result, the PALAR M-CoP successfully maintain a "self-interested and public-spirited" philosophical balance (Aristotle, 1976, 103b-1140b, 104a4-a cited in Nugus *et al.,* 2012, p. 1947). Treating power synonymously with 'empowerment' (Rye, 2015), the CTs in this study built and applied three ethical power types: 'power to', 'power with' and 'power through' (Allen, 1999; Thomas, 2011; Morris, 2002 cited in Pansardi, 2012; Neal, 2014). As evinced in this research, "different [types and] modes of power may be more salient than others in different circumstances, at different times and in different situations" (Rye, 2015, p. 316). As will be discussed and is illustrated in Figure 5-16, PALAR processes infused with these power types led to innovative, reinforcive and transformative power outcomes.

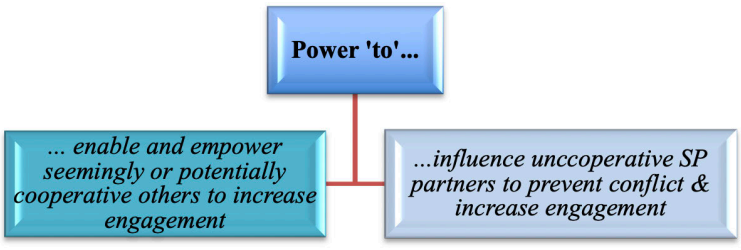
Figure 5-16 PALAR Processes, Power Types and Outcomes




### 5.5.4.1 Power ‘to’ Critical Actions for Empowerment and Change

The ‘power to’ concept revealed itself in various ways in this study depending on: i) CTs’ “location in the system” (Boje and Rosile, 2001, p. 111)” (Avelino, 2017, p. 513), and thus their perceived legitimacy; and ii) the degree to which SP partners were deemed to be cooperative or uncooperative and powerful or powerless. This led to a dual manifestation of the application of the ‘power to’ concept, as illustrated below.

Figure 5-17 Power ‘to’ Dual Goals



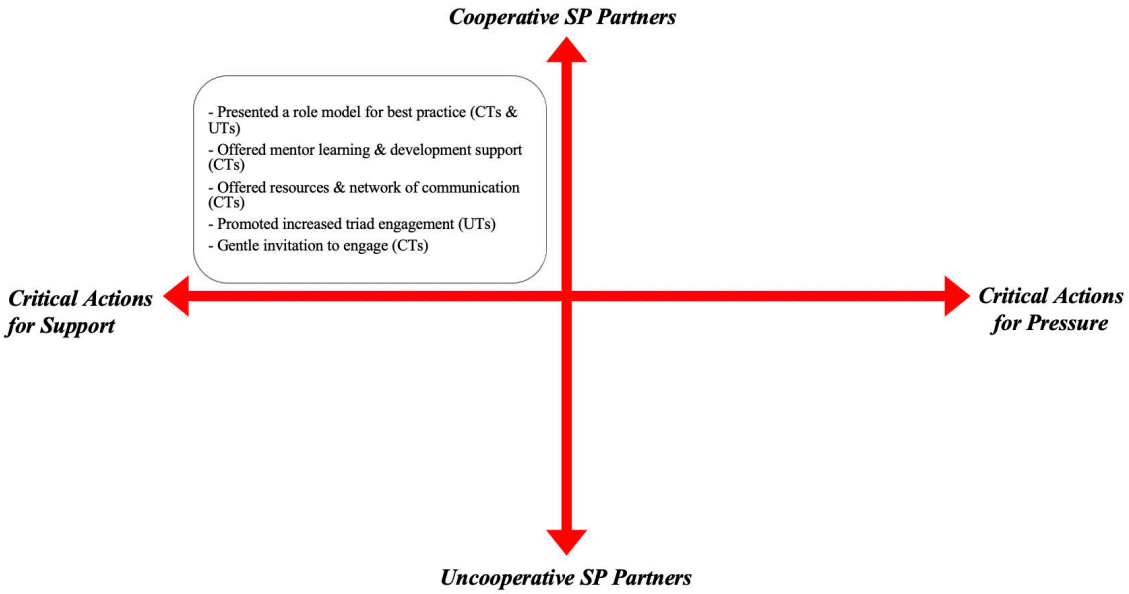
This discussion explores how critical actions for empowerment and change are most effective when both 'power to' outcomes are equally prioritised.

i) 'Power to' Enable, Empower and Influence Cooperative SP Partners: This study offers a response to Thomas's (2011) query about "whether empowerment is a zero-sum gain or whether the empowerment of a person entails the disempowering of another?" (p. 445). In demonstrating an Aristotelian value for ethics in their shared praxis (Nugus *et al.,* 2012) for empowerment and change, PALAR M-CoP members used 'power to' as "a productive force which invests agents with capacities to act" (Rye, 2015, p. 305)[66]. Over time, CTs identified that a critical function of their role as mentor leaders was to empower, strengthen and foster growth in others (Gardner, 1990 cited in Pigg, 2002; Thomas, 2011), ultimately enabling SP partners with a greater "ability to act" (Wartenberg 1990, p. 198 cited in Thomas, 2011) in line with the Guidelines on SP (Teaching Council, 2013). Stakeholder analysis was important for recognising and weaving successful 'stakeholder ties' with cooperative SP partners (Lawlor, 2015). As suggested by Lawlor (2015), CTs placed the concept of interest centrally by approaching colleagues with whom they had most in common, such as PE department and PE-UT colleagues, as well as those with whom they had a positively established working

[66] Rye (2015) assertion builds upon the positions of Haugaard (2003, 2012), Arendt (1970) and Parsons (1963), to name a few.

relationship. For such SP partners, CTs were found to use their 'power to' offer supports for enablement and empowerment, such as those in Figure 5-18.

Figure 5-18 Power to' offer support to cooperative SP partners




Gently inviting cooperative partners to engage (Christens, 2010), using the 'expressive dimension' (Riger, 1993) was considered to be important. As Poekert *et al.*'s (2016) work indicates, to be accepted as a mentor leader, it was important that SP partners not only accepted CTs' legitimacy, but that they considered them to be "a nonsupervisory, nonthreatening support, thus overcoming expectations of superiority or expertise that would make teachers less willing to work" with them (p. 311). As Yukl and Becker (2006) advise, SP partners were empowered by having greater access to information and materials which assisted them to fulfil their roles more effectively. CTs exercised the 'individualist power' mode (Rye, 2015), where they had the power to collate and distributed resources.[67] In doing so, they were using resources, which are considered a "thin form" of power (Thomas, 2011, p. 349) to empower

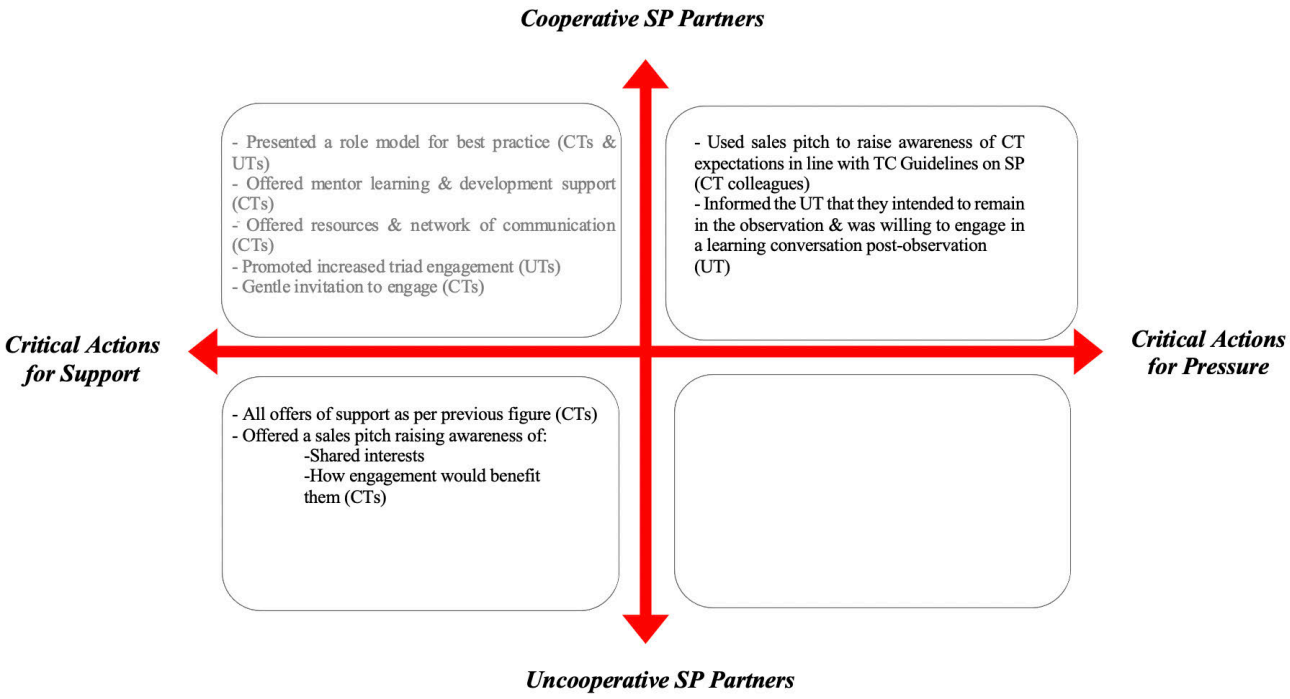
[67] Such as: partnership university SP handbooks, mentoring literature, forms and posters, to name a few

colleagues (Wartenberg 1990, p. 198 cited in Thomas, 2011) to act. For those CT colleagues whose previous reticence to engage was attributed to a perceived lack of confidence and clarity about the role; the offer of learning and development support was deemed effective. As they generated an informal "network of information" (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013, p. 150), they opened up lines of communication (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015). In addition to having the power to 'suggest', CTs empowered SP partners through their socio-political power to 'influence' **(**Smith, 1960 cited in Jenkins, 2009) through modelling. Leading by example, CTs began to produce a social structure which shaped colleagues' 'practical consciousness' (Giddens, 1984) resulting in increasingly "instinctive socially embedded and habitual ways of acting" (Rye, 2015, p. 315). In doing so, the CTs were found to use the 'constitutive power' mode (Rye, 2015), which raised their profile as mentor leaders and as teachers whom the SP partners could turn to for support. Similarly, on the back of feeling psychologically empowered, CTs exercised their 'power to' (Neal, 2014) assert their presence and involvement (McNiff, 2013; Nowotny, 2003) during PE-UT visits and in some cases, during non-PE UT visits. Sharing that lesson observation, followed by a learning conversation were regular practice for the CT-PST dyad, the CTs invited the UT to expand the process to include all triad members.

ii) <u>'Power to' Influence and Persuade Uncooperative SP Partners:</u> Contrary to power theorists such as Bachrach and Baratz (1962), the CTs in this study acknowledged that 'power to' could be used to achieve their CPDL outcomes in the face of inertia and / or resistance by seemingly uncooperative others (Lukes, 1978; Allen, 1999; Rye, 2015). CTs determined that the 'next best' partners to approach were those "previously or naturally uninvolved people" (Locke *et al.,* 2013, p. 579), who undermined their mentoring efforts and complicated the dyad dynamic with their PST. Such partners shared 'structural similarities' with the CTs (Kania and Kramer,

2011; Lawlor, 2015): CTs for the PST's second subject and some PE and non-PE UTs. Power was exerted 'to' avoid conflict, overt or covert, by "influencing, shaping and determining" the SP and mentoring goals of other partners (Lukes, 1974 cited in Torfing, 2009). In challenging situations, short term, indirect and developmental approaches are helpful for avoiding social conflict (Pigg, 2002) such as rivalry and resentment (Lukes, 1978; Issac, 1987). It is indicated that the CPDL model processes promoted a balance between cooperation and consensus, through the use of slightly more visible forms of power (Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998 cited in Alvenio, 2017).

Figure 5-19 Power to offer support to and apply pressure upon uncooperative SP partners




As found by Labone and Long (2016), when attempting to engage less cooperative partners, one should avoid creating "too great a dissonance between assessment of current capability [or willingness] and ideal new practice" (p. 56). Temporarily satisfied with small gestures of engagement (e.g., remaining in the PST's lesson), CTs opted to leave some mentoring practices

and SP guidelines in the "background until people [were] ready to explore them" in practice (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013, p. 22) e.g., actively observing PSTs' lessons; facilitating generative learning conversations; engaging more in the triad process. Whilst this stretched their diplomacy skills, CTs demonstrated a cognisance of the fact that poorly pitched attempts to exert control can create, rather than resolve problems (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). As recommended by Lawlor (2015), some CTs used stronger lobbying strategies for empowerment and change more deliberately when dealing with SP partners who were disinterested, or indeed those who perceived themselves to be too busy. From the various iterations of participative leadership, the CTs predominantly opted to be leaders who "sell" change and innovation, by using tactics such as "rational persuasion and inspirational appeals" (Yukl and Becker, 2006, p. 213). Such an aim was achieved by raising partners' awareness of how engagement in mentoring and SP served as a powerful professional development exercise for them personally (Kania and Kramer, 2011; Lawlor, 2015; Tahira and Mudassar, 2019). They also appealed to partners by "evoking matters related to [what listeners]...detest and are opposed to" as "the more unified the audience, the easier it is to play on common emotional references" (Engelstad, 2009, p. 218). With that in mind, the CTs generated what Torfing (2009) calls a "manipulated consensus" (Torfing, p. 111). In this case, CTs broached colleagues' evaluation apprehension surrounding those teacher evaluation processes involved not only in mentoring, but also on a whole school and system level e.g. lesson observation and critique, the provision of feedback, to name a few. They adopted the: "either we take hold of the future or the future will take hold of us" attitude as influential capital (Dixon, 1998 cited in Teare, 2013, p. 68) and reassured partners that engagement would make them more familiar with, and less anxious about peer and school evaluation processes (Clement, 1996). This cultural-focused strategy was well timed, given the profession's growing concern over the global culture of accountability for teachers (Ó'Ruairc, 2015a; Sugrue, 2012), which, in this

case, was further heightened by teachers' agitated reactions to the Teaching Council's professional code of conduct (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012). CTs also exercised 'strategic power' by aligning their requests to their knowledge of the formal (e.g., Teaching Council guidelines) and informal rules (e.g., school cultures and structures) (Rye, 2015) regarding SP. They communicated that all CT and UT partners should equally contribute to the process and adhere to the guidelines (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). Contrary to the research and past experiences of making themselves "scarce" (Young and MacPhail, 2015, p. 229-230), the CTs refused to be dismissed (Colvin and Ashman, 2010; Cullimore and Simmons, 2010) or marginalised to the periphery of the triad process (Young and MacPhail, 2015). Rather than requesting whether or not their presence was required, they informed less cooperative UT that they wished to adhere to the guidelines by engaging in a shared supervision approach, thus remaining in the observation lesson and post-observation learning conversation. Employing this power mode is said to make it easier to coax others to follow practices, which one might value (Rye, 2015).

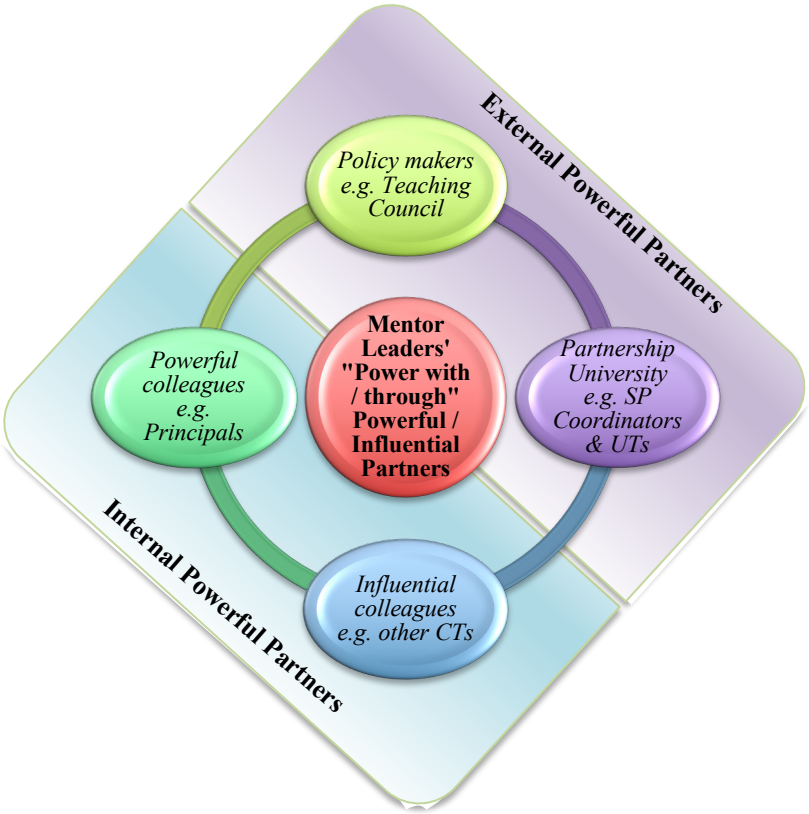
Though the above power types and modes were effective, in the case of even less cooperative colleagues, 'power to' achieve their social and political goals was highly dependent upon, and activated by their capacity to harness 'power with' and 'power through' others at the organisational level.

#### 5.5.4.2 Power 'with' and 'through' SP Allies

Whilst this study verifies Rye's (2015) claim that individual actions are more empowered and empowering, if they occur within a network such as the PALAR M-CoP; it

builds upon this claim, proposing that individual and community empowerment fall at the final empowerment hurdle without the 'power to' collectively mobilise (Isaac, 1987) at the organisational level in the face of inertia and resistance. In such cases, using one's 'power to' harness 'power with' (Angelique *et al.,* 2013; Culley and Hughey, 2008; Neal and Neal, 2011) and 'power through' others is crucial (Allen, 1999; Thomas, 2011; Morris 2002 cited in Pansardi, 2012). Those SP partners are illustrated in Figure 5-20.

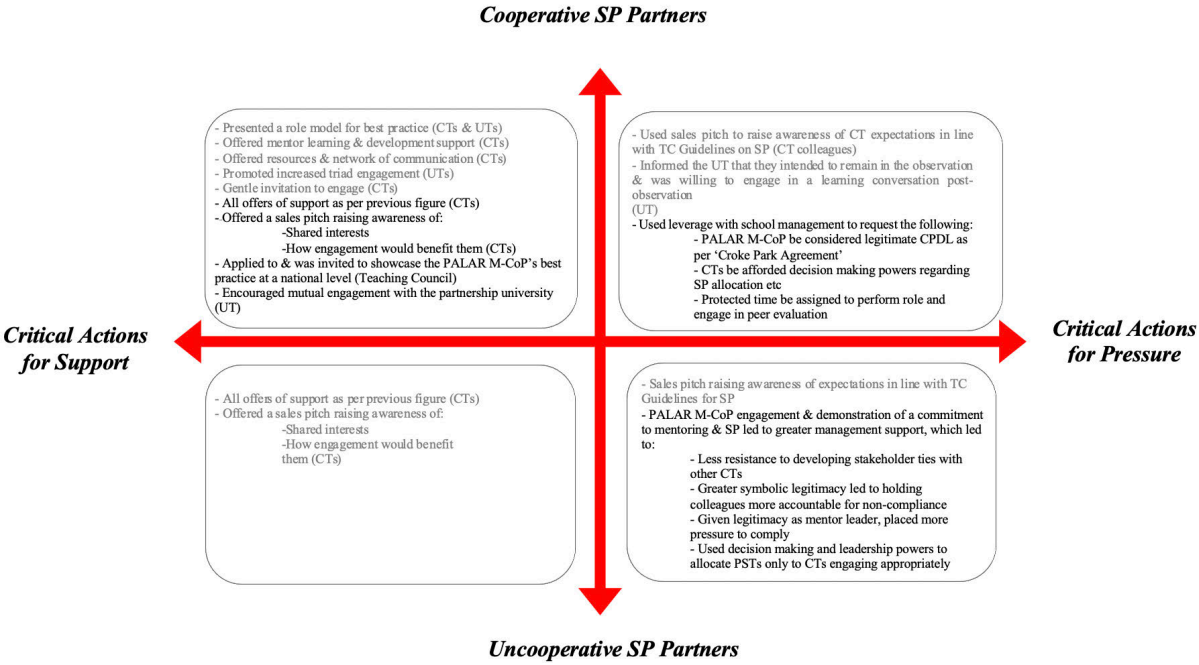
Figure 5-20 Internal and external powerful SP partners




The CTs, understanding that "they would not be so effective alone", sought "to act in concert" 'with' and 'through' others partners in order to build the "organisational clout they need[ed] to be effective" (Rye, 2015, p. 314). PALAR processes assisted in the development of organisation and mobilisation tactics, which resulted in mutually beneficial outcomes (Neal, 2014) for SP partners, which ultimately had a positive impact on the CTs' CPDL

implementation. The following critical actions for support and pressure utilised the power 'with' and 'through' effectively.

Figure 5-21 Power 'with' and 'through' SP partners to apply pressure upon uncooperative / powerful SP partners




External Powerful SP Partners: As proposed by scholars, having the backing of powerful partners was helpful for buttressing attempts to influence reluctant partners (Pigg, 2002; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). As outlined in Table 21 below, external partners each held a shared vested interest in facilitating the CTs' efforts to develop a mentoring and SP culture.

Table 21. Vested interest contributing to power 'with' and 'through' critical actions

| External SP Partner | Vested Interest (power 'with' and 'through') |
|---|---|
| Teaching Council | Given that the guidelines had not been well received by many (O'Doherty, 2016), it was in the Teaching Council's best interests to accept the PALAR M-CoP's application to present their work at FEILTE; work which showcased for the wider profession that the reconceptualization of SP could indeed be realised through effective CPDL. This gave the PALAR M-CoP the opportunity to 'prepare for', publicly 'present' and 'celebrate' their work (Zuber-Skerrit, 2002; Wood and Zuber-Skerrit, 2013) on a national educational platform for a wider audience (Zuber-Skerrit, 2013). This outcome, alongside gaining national recognition by the press, gave the community much needed affirmation (Patton *etal.,* 2013; Brennan, 2017) and sent a clear message to others that their "voice should be heard" (Nowotny, 2003, p. 155). |
| HEI | The PE personnel from the ITE partnership university, being conscious of the overwhelming expectations of the SP guidelines, had a vested interest in promoting and investing in the continued or potential partnership engagement of schools and their PE CTs. At an organisational level, CTs were empowered by their connection to the partnership university, something which offered not only personal pride (McCorkel Clinard and Ariav, 1998), but also gained them the recognition of colleagues. As previously discussed, the CTs used 'power to' engage the UTs more effectively. However, it is argued that this was more achievable due to the structural change prompted by the partnership university, whereby the PE UT was allocated to a specific school for a sustained period of time, where |

| | |
|---|---|
| | possible. As will be further explored, this alteration paved the way for collegial relationships to be built between triad members and subsequently, for mutual empowerment to be fostered (Yee, 1968 cited in Veal and Rickard, 1998). |

Internal Influential and Powerful SP Partners: School management and colleagues who supported the re-conceptualisation of SP, stood to gain power 'with' and 'through' the CTs. A particularly effective critical action involved the weaving of 'stakeholder ties' (Lawlor, 2015) with potentially influential assets (Pigg, 2002), who had a shared interest or agenda with the CTs (Neal, 2014). The notion of a vertical-hierarchical power typology (Alvenio, 2019) was rejected by the use of these power modes. This was especially evident in the case of an 'influential colleague' who, whilst embarking upon a peer mentoring related masters study was empowered by one of the community members' sharing of expertise and community materials (power 'to'). In return, the CT's colleague, feeling more empowered, promoted a mentoring culture with other traditionally less motivated colleagues (Lawlor, 2015). The CT acted as 'quarterback' (power 'to'), sharing leadership 'with' their colleague (Erickson *et al.,* 2012, Lawlor, 2015) and in return, their colleague took up a supportive offensive position (power 'to' influence other colleagues), carrying some of the empowerment responsibility for achieving organisational change (power 'with' the PALAR CoP member) (Poekert *et al.,* 2016).

As previously determined, the degree to which a mentoring and SP culture can be cultivated is largely reliant upon school principals and management (Ní Áingléis, 2009; Lawlor, 2015; Cooper *et al.,* 2016). Contrary to claims that principals are particularly less inclined to prioritise mentoring CPDL during an economic crisis (O'Grady, 2017), this study found that school management could be influenced to support CTs, once they recognised that their efforts were worthwhile. Having proved their time commitment to their professionalism, some CTs were rewarded with a formal acknowledgement of their CPDL activity being considered as legitimate (King, 2014; 2016), from a 'Croke

Park Agreement' perspective. Though "true empowerment requires that managers relinquish some of their control to employees" (Yukl and Becker, 2006, p. 220), it is proposed that prior to delegating responsibility and power to them (Eljaaidi, 2016), they needed first to trust that the CTs were, what McNiff (2013) refers to as "legitimate knowers" (McNiff, 2013, p. 4). As indicated by Poekert *et al.* (2016), the CTs maintained that efforts at mentor leadership were more successful when their expertise as mentors was considered to be legitimate. It is proffered that CTs' sustained engagement with the PALAR M-CoP provided a foundation for others to have faith (Alvenio, 2017) in CTs' commitment to and expertise in (Nowotny, 2003) mentoring and SP. As proposed by Engelstad (2009), the situatedness of the experiences upon which they could draw, provided a stronger rationale for their trustworthiness as experts at the organisational level. It is suggested that CTs were increasingly considered to be a potentially valuable resource (Cited in Pigg, 2002). However, the social robustness of CTs' specialist knowledge was strengthened (Nowotny, 2003) and their social capital was bolstered by their constant access to an influential cross-school network, in which expertise was co-produced (Pigg, 2002). Mirroring the claims of Nowotny (2003), 'strength in numbers' was found to raise the volume of, and trust in their representative voices, on matters relating to mentoring and SP.

CTs' readiness to approach school management for support was bolstered not only by their enhanced "self-efficacy about [their] ability" (Liden, Wayne, and Sparrow, 2000; Joo and Hyun Shim, 2010)[68], but also by an increased perception of acknowledgement and respect from others. School leaders who wished to support the reconceptualised SP

[68] Linden *et al.,*'s (2000) concept of 'competence' is considered to be a central construct of psychological empowerment.

approach had the impetus to empower CTs through "participative management" (Kizilos, 1990 cited in Pansardi, 2012). Taking on board CTs' suggestions, as well as sanctioning changes to formal and informal organisational design (Kizilos, 1990 cited in Pansardi, 2012), school leaders revealed their acknowledgement of CTs as competent decision makers (Zimmerman, 2000; Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016). CTs' collective bartering (Jones, 2007) resulted in 'agenda setting' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962 cited in Angelique *et al.,* 2013) outcomes which recognised time as an "important mechanism of power" in the school structure (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016, p. 216)[69]. Resultantly, it is perceived that, placing greater confidence in their staff, school leaders provided CTs with lee-way (Humphreys, 2010) to engage in protected peer evaluation time, a process which can be mutually reinforcive of mentoring processes. The use of power 'through' and 'with' was particularly evident where one CT was permitted to use school structures and processes (Neal, 2014) to open up lines of communication to staff (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015). By giving them access to the coveted arena of a staffroom meeting to deliver their sales pitch (Rye, 2015), the mentor leader was granted a degree of 'bureaucratic power' (Rye, 2015). The adjustment of structures and processes, all of which made way for cultural growth for the school, as well as its staff (Zimmerman, 2000) is an example of Jenkin's (2009) emphasis regarding 'power through': "If…B [CT] is able to secure from A [school leader] the decision that B requires, then B has displayed power through A's authority (ibid.: 19fn)" (p. 143). The above outcomes indicate that the CTs in this study successfully exercised 'transformative power', in that they contributed to the challenging of and renewal or reconfiguration of existing structures and processes,

[69] As reported, such outcomes included the scheduling of meetings with management regarding SP and the legitimisation of informal roles for mentor leaders.

which were previously unhelpful to the cultural reconceptualization of mentoring and SP, as well as the reinvention or creation of new structures or processes which were helpful (Haxeltine *et al.,* 2016 cited in Alvenio, 2017). Scholars claim though that transformative power "may not be 'enough' to" fortify change (Alvenio, 2017, p. 509) and that 'reinforcive power' may play a role. Although the original operational definition of reinforcive power involves the "reinforce[ment] and reproduc[tion of] existing structures and institutions" (Alvenio, 2017, p. 508), the CTs in this study used their 'power to' reinforce new change and innovation, by controlling participation (Bachrach and Baratz,1962 cited in Angelique *et al.,* 2013). This was evident in the case of the CT who successfully bargained to hold the decision making power (Rye, 2015) to determine which departments and colleagues would be allocated a PST. Though "power over" has historically been looked upon unfavourably from an empowerment perspective and should not be "the sole aim for empowerment" (Neal, 2014, p. 395), this work acknowledges that it can be pre-requisite for "power to" to be possible, in limited cases. Whilst the above critical action outcome appears to be reflective of "power over", the intention relates to the safeguarding of standards, rather than simply the wielding of power over colleagues. The CT in question used this opportunity to reward colleagues who were engaging more professionally and to reinforce those practices which aligned more to their CPDL and the re-envisioned model for SP. This sent a clear message of expectation to CT colleagues who were not assigned a PST regarding what they needed to change in order to be involved in the future, if they so wished to be. Such authority and responsibility to control and encourage participation was realised through management's openness to delegate (Yukl and Becker, 2006) to the CTs.

### 5.5.5 *Impact and 'Second Order Change'*

Research indicates that though some CPDL models acknowledge that the organisational environment might have an impact upon the outcomes of model implementation for teachers (see Guskey, 2002), they fail to appreciate that the model and its learning processes and CPDL pedagogies might have the potential to influence the environment and those in it (Boylan *et al.,* 2018). This was avoided in this study however, as teachers' 'salient outcomes' (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002) were not limited to pupils (see Guskey, 2002), but were extended to consider both themselves and other SP partners as potential beneficiaries of their CPDL engagement. This study contributes to the research, as called for by Poekert *et al.* (2016), by addressing how an individual's CPDL can positively affect the organisation and, by extension, the SP partnership. As found in this study, they described

> "…how emerging teacher leaders' subsequent interactions with their colleagues (both teachers and administrators) can give rise to a new school context by developing new patterns of interactions and thus creating a new emergent system, a community of practice (Wenger 1998) much like introducing new DNA into cellular systems can cause changes in the tissues they compose and reproduce" (p. 325).

Understanding that power is inevitably present and exercised (Clegg, 1989, 2006 cited in Thorkildsen, 2013), the mentor leaders in this study garnered and used various power modes to enact "second order change" (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010, p. 226).

#### 5.5.5.1 Power 'to'

This research offers that mentor leaders' attempts at suggestion, persuasion and enticement (Jenkins, 2009; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Neal, 2014; Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015; Rye, 2015) successfully drove "change among their [SP] peers" (Cooper *et al.,* 2016, p. 105), whom, having received no formal ITE mentoring and SP CPDL, had historically failed to engage, perhaps due to lower perceived competence and sense of role legitimacy (Young and MacPhail, 2010). Table 22 identifies that perceived changes to the nature of SP partners' engagement runs contrary to past evidence, as offered by the listed sources.

Table 22 Perceived Impact: Other CTs' Engagement

| **Perceived Impact: Other CTs' Engagement** | **Contrary Sources** |
|---|---|
| More inclined to listen to the CTs' thoughts and advice about mentoring and SP. | Anicich *et al.* (2016); Sparkes *et al.* (1990). |
| Less inclined to simply hand over their lessons to the PST. | Harford and O'Doherty (2016). |
| Less reticent and fearful of engaging in mentoring processes related to teacher evaluation. | Sugrue (2013; 2012). |
| More appreciative of and engaged in lesson observation, providing feedback and engaging in generative learning conversations. | O'Grady (2017); Young and MacPhail, (2015); Belton *et al.* (2009). |

Where this occurred, CTs felt that their mentoring role was easier to implement because other CTs, PE or otherwise, were more inclined to reinforce the reconceptualised SP approaches with their PSTs (Teaching Council, 2011, 2012, 2013). That the PE CTs

were effective in influencing colleagues is a significant demonstration that CPDL models, such as the one in this study, can support teachers of marginal (Anicich *et al.*, 2016; Sparkes *et al.,* 1990) and low status subjects (Humphreys, 2010) to overcome collegial disrespect and distrust (Sparkes *et al.,* 1990), and to transcend the hierarchy to a position of greater power, to enact second order change and to empower colleagues.

Triad Engagement: This work proposes that mentor leaders' efforts to influence (Jenkins, 2009; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Neal, 2014; Ruechakul *et al.,* 2015; Rye, 2015) triad partners to engage more in the process can be successful, despite a history of minimal engagement by UTs (O'Grady, 2015). The findings contradict O'Grady's (2017) perceived claims that there was not an appetite amongst university personnel to

develop a genuine partnership. Table 23 identifies that perceived changes to the triad partners' engagement runs contrary to past evidence, as offered by the listed sources.

Table 23 Perceived Impact: Triad Engagement

| **Perceived Impact: Triad Engagement** | **Contrary Sources** |
|---|---|
| UTs were more impressed by the CTs' mentoring practices and ability to effectively observe and facilitate meaningful learning conversations. | Meegan *et al.* (2013). |
| UTs valued the triad process more, recognising and appreciating what they could gain from it and from engaging more meaningfully with triad partners. | Mulcahy and McSharry (2012); Sugrue (2013). |
| Effective triad learning conversations offering context made the experience less intimidating and judgmental for the PST, resulting in greater engagement from all partners with the CT. | Veal and Rickard (1998). |

This research indicates that the impact of critical action can contribute to CTs overcoming power imbalances, which have been said to exist within the Irish triad (Meegan *et al.,* 2013). Contradicting the literature, this work argues that, despite power typically residing with the assessing UT (Veal and Rikard, 1998), the power balance can be spread more democratically, with the CT taking a more central position within the triad, as promoted by Young and MacPhail (2015). In so doing, the relational disturbance caused by such an imbalance for the CT-PST dyad (Caplow, 1968 cited in Veal and Rickard, 1998) can be alleviated and hierarchical relationships and cultures can be turned on their head (Veal and Rickard, 1998). As such, it is believed that the PALAR M-CoP acted as a positive catalyst for transitioning the CT from being 'used' by the UT, and seen to be superfluous by the PST, to becoming a valued triad-partner

(Gleeson, 2014) by both the UT and PST. There is evidence to propose that having greater opportunity to engage consistently within a particular triad, not only supports the development of a "partnership approach", as promoted by the Teaching Council (2013, p. 3), but also allows time for democratic triad processes, reciprocal relations and co-reflective practices to be developed (Campbell and Campbell, 2000 cited in Chambers *et al.,* 2011). This was an important change, as this study proffers that effective mentoring alone will fail to alleviate the evaluation apprehension which PST feel in the lead up to, and during the UT's SP assessment visits (Veal and Rikard, 1998). This work evinces that the PALAR M-CoP model's approach to critical reflection, infused by the three CPDL pedagogies, resulted in a more neutral and benign experience, as Cushion (2018) recommends and therefore, somewhat neutralised the more "subtle and persuasive exercise of power" (Gilbert, 2001, p. 200). As power shifted slightly toward the PST (Langdon, 2014), and they were reassured that the approach provided more context (Earl and Timperley, 2008), less stress and intimidation were perceived to be experienced (Yee, 1968 cited in Veal and Rickard, 1998; Collinson *et al.,* 2009; Earl and Timperley, 2008). Overall, this work offers that the enhanced status and presence of the CT in the triad process achieved what Ó'Ruairc (2014) recommended: "if nothing else, this would be fairer for the student teacher as it would enable the tutor to form a more rounded picture of them" (p. 8).

#### 5.5.5.2 Power 'through' and 'with'

This study affirms that the endorsement of CTs' critical actions was more attainable because it occurred within a plexus of collective relations (Arendt, 1970; McDaid, 2010; Rye, 2015). It is determined that the teacher leaders' right to power and

to the execution of authority was perceived to be more legitimate (Clegg, 1975; Gordon, 2009) due to their apparent capacity to harness power 'with' (Angelique *et al.,* 2013; Culley and Hughey, 2008; Neal and Neal, 2011) and 'through' (Allen, 1999; Thomas, 2011; Morris 2002 cited in Pansardi, 2012) influential and powerful colleagues.

Some of the critical actions in this study can be categorised as using and generating "innovative power", due to the fact that CTs yielded the social and political support of others as a new resource (Avelino, 2017). As influential and cooperative colleagues altered their practice and promoted the reconceptualization of SP, they not only reinforced the CTs' efforts at change, they made the CTs' power more visible to a greater number of SP partners within the organisation (Arendt, 1958; Gordon, 2002 cited in Alvenio, 2017). Such 'social recognition' from colleagues, particularly from powerful partners, is said to be a transformative mediator for empowerment (Nohl, 2009; Taylor and Cranton, 2013). As found by Long (2009), this placed mentor leaders in a better position to make less cooperative colleagues increasingly more accountable for engaging with guidelines[70], which were previously placed in the priority background (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). It is accepted that garnering the support and recognition of the principal symbolically legitimised CTs (Cooper *et al.,* 2016). It is argued that this made rallying endeavours, the weaving of stakeholder ties and the management of relationships less overwhelming (Lawlor, 2015) and more fruitful (Zimmerman, 2000; Cooper *et al.,* 2016). Ultimately, the "support from leadership was

[70] Guidelines such as: "Afford the student teacher opportunities to observe their teaching (and that of their colleagues)…Observe lessons and provide feedback…Encourage, support and facilitate the student teacher in: critical reflection on his/her practice….Work collaboratively with the student teacher, the HEI placement tutor and the school principal" (Teaching Council, 2013, p. 19).

the vehicle through which the change agent" potential of the mentor leader was enabled (King, 2016, p. 585). The above outcomes demonstrate the power of "individuals com[ing] together to act intentionally towards a common goal, the aim of which [wa]s to expand the boundary of empowerment of each person which can only be achieved through the empowerment of the Whole" (Galiè and Farnworth, 2019, p. 14).

From one perspective, second order change was perceived as an end in and of itself. Though the nature and depth of change varied, all community members in this study confirmed that they were "sowing seeds of empowerment…for second order change" and that their change efforts were "slowly beginning to bear fruit" (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016, p. 228). Contrary to previous reports (O'Grady, 2017), it is argued that the CTs' work contributed to their schools' growing capacity to offer a 'partnership embeddedness model' which was more characteristic of the 'generative-transformative' approach, than the previously adopted connective approach (Jones *et al.,* 2016). More specifically, it highlights that where the reconceptualization of SP may have appeared to be an insurmountable expectational leap for SP partners (O'Doherty *et al.,* 2017), a transformative CPDL model can assist with making this leap more achievable. From another perspective, second order change was perceived to be a means to an end, in that organisational empowerment helped the CTs to overcome some underlying difficulties with innovation implementation (Fullan 1999; Watts *et al.,* 2011; Sahlberg, 2012; King, 2016). As critical actions empowered others within the organisation and indeed the organisation itself, the CTs too were empowered (Zimmerman, 1995; 2002; Lawlor, 2015). It is proposed that second order change contributed to the prevention of new mentoring and SP ideals being 'washout' (Zeichner, 1987). Contrary to literary claims; capacity, quality and meaningful change

were not lost (Lovett and Gilmore, 2003) and the effort and resources afforded to CPDL engagement were not wasted (Poekert *et al.,* 2016, p. 308).

### 5.5.6 *"What's in it for the CT": Perceptions of Impact and Growth*

The psychological empowerment of those attempting to enact change has been relatively unarticulated in the research literature (Cranton, Taylor, Macleod and Egan, 2009 cited in Howie and Bagnall, 2013). Though changing mindsets is considered to be rare (Kool and Stoll, 2017), CTs' increased exposure to progress resulted in the restructuring of negative cognitions previously held about CPDL (Stangier *et al.,* 2003; Herbert, Gaudiano, Rheingold, Myers, Dalrymple and Nolan, 2005) and research outcomes (Gleeson and O'Donnachain, 2009; Gleeson, 2010). Experiencing positive impact is particularly important for elevating teachers' awareness that change and the eradication of, or partial removal of complex barriers, is possible (Cunningham, 2007; Nies and Sauer, 2012 cited in Fricke, 2013). As a result, CTs' sense of political efficacy for (Watts *et al.,* 2011; Nugus *et al.,* 2012) and critical motivation to enact change (Diemer *et al.,* 2017) was enhanced in this study. Whilst influencing outcomes at work (Joo and Hyun Shim, 2010, p. 429) directly augments 'psychological empowerment' (Liden *et al.,* 2000), believing that one's actions make "a difference" (Thomas and Velthouse, p. 672 cited in Yukl and Becker, 2006), however modest, is considered to be as significant as actually making an impact (Liden *et al.,* 2000 cited in Joo and Hyun Shim, 2010). An important understanding of empowerment relates to the fact that even when critical actions are not successful at achieving second order change, empowerment may still be experienced (Zimmerman, 2000). There is evidence to propose that PALAR M-CoP engagement develops the critical and complex systems

outlook (Kools and Stoll, 2017) required for teacher leaders to accept the nature and pace of change. Such thinking also appreciates that "the search for a single 'optimum' strategy" is short-sighted, as "any strategy can only be optimum under certain conditions, and when those conditions change, the strategy may no longer be optimal. In essence…flexible approaches" are required (Ashby 1969 cited in Midleton-Kelly, 2022, p. 14). The CPDL model also successfully promoted the personalised need to "start from the opportunities available to them where [CTs were], at the time they [were at]" (Thorkildsen, 2013, p. 31). As Glassman and Erdem (2014) stated, they learned to understand to take things 'as they come' gaining a greater practical appreciation for the fact that change, and indeed empowerment, is not just slow. It requires time. This study revealed that sharing and seeing their own, others' and their collective progress, helped them to become more satisfied with a "theory of small wins" (Weick, 1986 cited in Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016, p. 228). Indeed, accepting, what Groundwater-Smith (2011) coins a "merely good" improvements mindset, is more realistic and achievable, than an unrealistic "drive toward an illusion of perfection" (Locke *et al.*, 2013, p. 12).

Based on the evidence from this study, it is argued that feelings of impact have a knock-on effect upon feelings of 'meaning'; another concept of psychological empowerment (Liden *et al.,* 2000), which refers to "the individual's value of the task goal or purpose" (Joo and Hyun Shim, 2010, p. 429). This work connects two concepts previous unrelated in the literature: the 'meaning' element of empowerment (Liden *et al.,* 2000) and the personal growth aspect of the teacher leader (Poekert *et al.*, 2016). Meaningful growth occurred as CTs in the study became "reinvigorated" by their mentoring CPDL and felt more passionately about their role in the SP change process (Poekert *et al.,*

2016). With leadership central to the CPDL model, they were "preparing for the future" with a more ambitious vision (Poekert *et al.,* 2016, p. 317), determined to "professionalise" mentoring and SP for themselves, their schools and the wider profession. Therefore, this research highlights that PALAR M-CoP processes contribute to the development of growth aspects (Poekert *et al.,* 2017), beyond mentoring, as CTs self-identified as teacher educators, as recommended by O'Grady (2017), and as leaders, as proposed by others (Ó'Ruairc, 2013; Cooper *et al.*, 2016). With leadership development explicitly facilitated, the PALAR M-CoP was unveiled as a transformative CPDL model (Brennan, 2017), which empowers teachers to no longer view themselves as mere "functionaries of the profession", but instead as "agents, engaged in the crucial process of educational" (Anderson *et al.,* 2015, p. 193) empowerment and change. To borrow from Freire (1970), the model helped the CTs to "'perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (p. 34). Such an outcome was reflected in the CTs perception of themselves as socio-political intellectuals (Poekert *et al.,* 2016), who could prompt transformation (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985) through their capacity as leaders for change and empowerment.

# 6 Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

The beauty of nature insists on taking its time.
Everything is prepared. Nothing is rushed.
The rhythm of emergence is a gradual, slow beat;
always inching its way forward, change remains faithful to itself
until the new unfolds in the full confidence of true arrival.
Because nothing is abrupt, the beginning of spring nearly always
catches us unawares. It is there before we see it;
and then we can look nowhere without seeing it.

John O'Donohue - "The Rhythm of Emergence,
Benedictus."

## *6.1 Introduction*

This chapter is designed to draw "the study to a close" (Brennan, 2017, p. 204). It recaps on the research problem, as well as the research questions. A synopsis of the key conclusions is provided. Limitations of the research are acknowledged. Recommendations are offered with respect to future practice and policy, with relevant stakeholders being placed in the spotlight. Finally, recommendations are made for future research.

### *6.2 Synopsis of the Research Problem*

In the opening chapters of this thesis, the following research issues were explored.

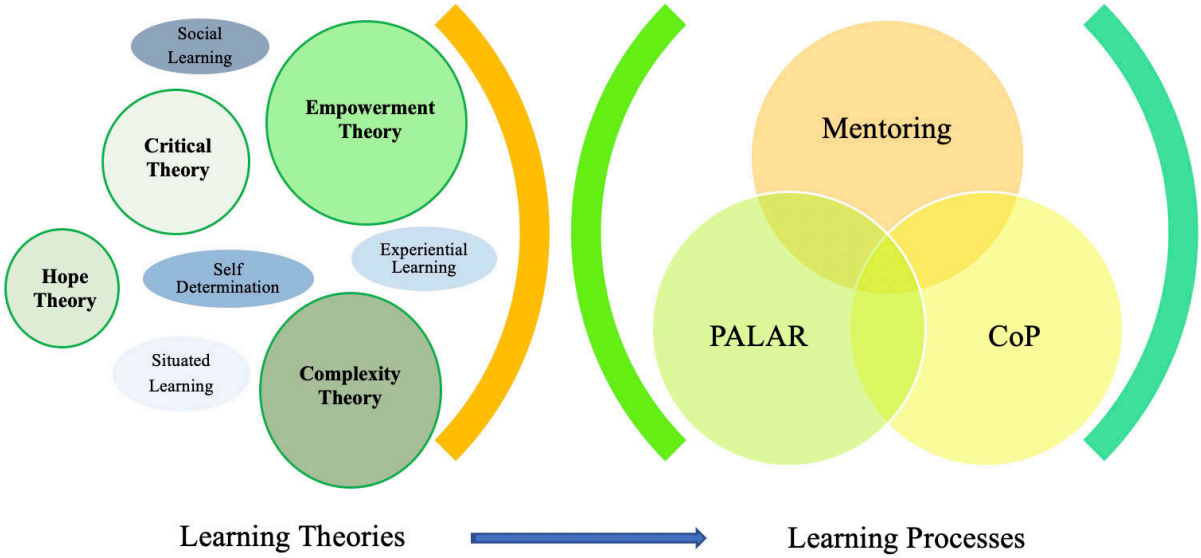
A general overview of CPDL literature was provided, highlighting how it is "an essential, integral part of the teaching profession" (de Vries, 2014, p. 343). The 'ideal' characteristics of 'transformative CPDL' were outlined (Brennan, 2017), with an emphasis being placed upon teacher learning as opposed to mere development (Cordingley, 2016). The problems associated with inadequate CPDL provision were described, with particular reference to the Irish context, which is said to be too transmissive (ASTI, 2010; Kennedy; 2014), system oriented (Lynch *et al.,* 2013; Kennedy, 2014; Patton and Parker, 2015) and over-focusing upon policy (Brennan, 2017) and curricular change (Harford, 2010). It fails to connect to teachers' needs, contexts or challenges (Patton *et al.,* 2013). It was highlighted that teachers become so disenfranchised by CPDL provision failing to result in positive outcomes (Sugrue, 2002), that they disengage (Makopoulou and Armour, 2011; Goodyear *et al.,* 2013).

There was an attempt to answer the call for teacher education researchers to better understand how a historical backdrop can affect current landscapes and initiatives (O'Donoghue and Harford, 2010; O'Donoghue *et al.,* 2017). It was considered that many deeply entrenched socio-cultural barriers still prevail (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011; O'Grady, 2017). Against this background, the more recent challenges posed by the 'Guidelines on School Placement' were explored. It was noted that these were not welcomed by all stakeholders (O'Grady, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018). Associated expectations were considered to present too great a cultural shift and the timing was believed to be ill-conceived (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012). Despite having "time" for "the guidelines to bed down", it was suggested that cultural

norms “appear[ed] to be holding steadfast”, negatively impacting implementation (O’Grady, 2017, p. 140).

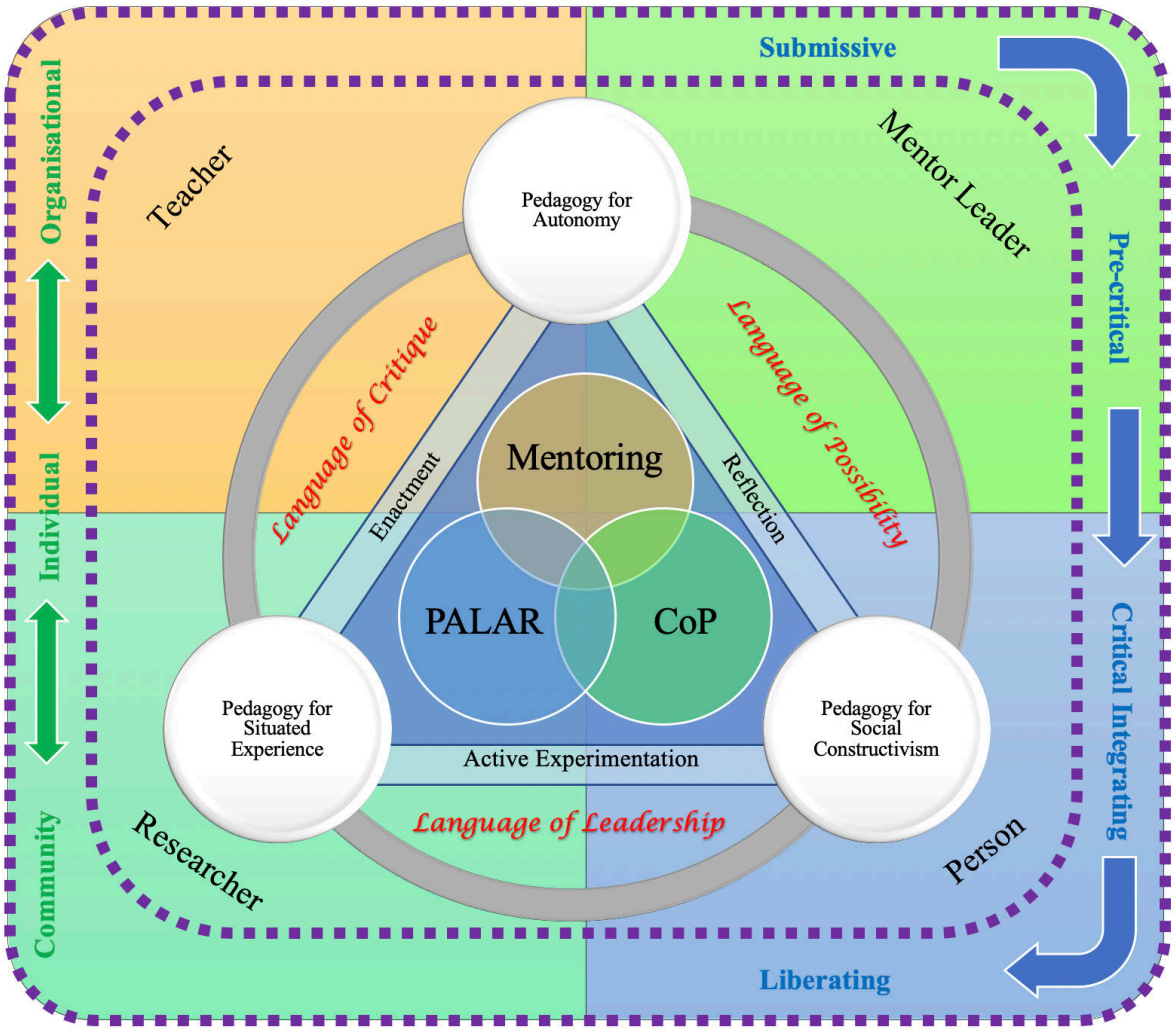
This study sought to devise “a context-specific responses to what school-university partnerships might look like” in the light of the existing challenges (Grimmett, Forgasz, Williams and White, 2018, p. 1). At the design stage, a CPDL model was proposed to support the growth of CTs as mentors for ITE PSTs: the PALAR M-CoP. The model’s multi-learning process design was described; highlighting how a M-CoP, structured by a PALAR strategy, could act as an effective pedagogical framework for overcoming current realities and reaching for the ideal. Each learning process was selected because it was fit for purpose given the aims of the study, though its participatory emphasis allowed for the process to evolve. Figure 6-1 provides an overview of the CPDL model at the ‘design stage’ of the study.

Figure 6-1 CPDL Evolving Multi-learning Process Meta-Framework



As understood at the time, the benefits of each CPDL learning process were listed, with the barriers to implementation also carefully considered. In particular, the model was initially built upon the development of: i) the principles of generative mentoring; ii) the three dimensions of a CoP; and iii) the eleven processes of a PALAR strategy. The methodology laid out the research methods but also outlined how the PALAR M-CoP was developed and how CTs interacted. Throughout the presentation of findings and the discussion of those findings, the initial CPDL model design was examined. It revealed that the nature of the initial model reflected a meta-design approach, which resulted in the model's nature both becoming more apparent and evolving as the study progressed. Though there were multiple evolutionary points, the following CPDL meta-model unfolded:

Figure 6-2 PALAR M-CoP: Transformative CPDL Meta-model




On the back of a growing understanding, this study sought to answer the following over-arching research question: "In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can CTs be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for PE-PSTs through engagement in and with a PALAR M-CoP?". Four key conclusions are offered, each of which are mapped to relevant research questions.

## *6.3 Key Conclusions*

Overall, this study concludes that in the contemporary education context in Ireland, CTs can be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for PE-PSTs through engagement in and with a PALAR M-CoP. Not only did the CPDL opportunity fill the cavernous void left by years of neglect for CTs (Hall *et al.,* 2018), it offered a remarkable departure from the customary Irish approach, resulting in transformative outcomes. The four conclusions drawn from this study revolve around one fundamental concept. The PALAR M-CoP was transformative due its meta-design nature. Acting upon the advice, to *act* upon evidence-based advice (Cordingley, 2016; Armour *et al.,* 2015), this meta-model (Boylan *et al.,* 2018) was flexible, creative and 'evolvable' enough (Giaccardi and Fischer, 2008) to account for CTs' complicated histories and changing realities (Rahman *et al.,* 2014; Maiese, 2017). The 'menu design' idiom is expanded for explanatory purposes. CTs were offered a set menu of multi-learning processes: mentoring, CoP dimensions and PALAR processes, allowing them to try on various culinary chef hats: mentor, mentor leader, researcher, teacher and person (Poekert *et al.,* 2016). The experience was enhanced by the inclusion of special ingredients, making it more palatable and catering for special requirements: a combined and partial treatment of meta-pedagogies and meta-learning theories. Unlike the fast food option, this meta-model was slow cooked, and as it simmered, CTs put on the chef's hat, tasted it, stirring it, turning the heat up and down and adding a little pinch of this or a small drop of that.

### 6.3.1 *Conclusion 1: Transformative CPDL Meta-Pedagogies for Mentor Growth*

The PALAR M-CoP was found to transform CTs' attitudes and practices. Though the growing professional identity of teachers is rarely considered (Huang, 2011; Boylan *et al.,* 2018), this study highlights that though CTs can set out on a CPDL journey determined to grow as mentors, deeper and wider growth (Girvan *et al.*, 2016) enabled CTs' to develop also as mentor leaders, researchers and teachers (Poekert *et al.,* 2016). The meta-model PALAR M-

CoP achieved this through the meta-pedagogical combination of PALAR processes and three interacting transformative CPDL pedagogies: The pedagogy for autonomy, the pedagogy for social constructivism and the pedagogy for situated learning.

The 'pedagogy for autonomy' (Manzano Vázquez, 2015) offered democratic experiences, which were committed to: learner-centredness, personalisation, volunteerism, choice, participation, self-determination, ownership, decision making, self-actualisation and psychological freedom. Democratic processes allowed for a voluntary pathway to CPDL; ownership over the CPDL process and control over the trajectory of evolving growth aspects. These autonomy supportive processes (Benita *et al.,* 2013; Kennedy, 2014; King, 2016; Brennan, 2017) enhanced CTs' inner motivation and sense of self-determination to engage in their CPDL (Ryan and Deci, 2006; Kiemer *et al.,* 2018) as fully as possible (Benita *et al.,* 2013).

Dissimilar to traditional models which have overlooked the importance of the social domain (Boylan *et al.,* 2018), as well as teachers' capacity to act as a powerful source of growth for themselves and others (Malin and Health, 2014), the meta-model in this study developed a 'pedagogy for social constructivism'. The PALAR M-CoP's multi-pathway (Boylan *et al.,* 2016), multi-directional (Azmitia, 2000 cited in Duncombe and Armour, 2004) and multi-source composition offered the CTs an iterative opportunity to co-construct their evolving practice with mentors from the cross-school M-CoP, as well as with SP partners such as PSTs, other CTs and UTs. Interactional facilitation fostered democratic dialogue and relational equality, both of which are required for the promotion of democratic participation and the development of authentic relationships and supportive spaces. Knowledge management strategies not only validated best practice and transformed the tacit to explicit (Chomsky, 1965;

Williams-Newball, 2014), boundary spanning (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011) and a commitment to dissensus building prevented the comfortable acceptance of consensus (Kakavelakis and Edwards, 2011), resulting in knowledge expansion (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011) and knowledge transfer (Christie *et al.,* 2015).

Unlike disconnected, single path, linear models which, at best, theorise about situated (Boylan *e al.,* 2018) and experiential learning (Blair, 2016), the PALAR M-CoP adopted a 'pedagogy for situated experience'. A multi-space, multi-pathway (Boylan *et al.,* 2018) approach was used to support CTs' situated cognition about their mentoring practices with living PSTs (Brown *et al.,* 1989; Van Kruiningen, 2013). An implementation bridge was built (Hall and Hord 2006; King, 2016; Sant, 2019) connecting their mentoring CPDL to the real world (Kolb, 1984; Brown *et al.,* 1989), through authentic activities, contexts and relationships. The abstract conceptualisation of (Kolb, 1984) and reflection 'in', 'on' and 'for' (Schön, 1983, 1987) their evolving practice as mentors was intentionally operationalised through iterative cycles of enactment and active experimentation of what they were learning with their PSTs (Kolb, 1984; Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002). Concrete experiences (Kolb, 1984) transformed already expanded knowledge through cognitive conflict and dissonance (Cobb *et al.,* 1990), which prompted CTs' drive to grow (Opfer and Peddar, 2011). It is concluded that growth as a mentor was achievable not only due to the 'pedagogy for situated experience', but due to how that experience was infused with the benefits of the two preceding pedagogies for 'autonomy' and 'social constructivist learning'.

This research proposes that a meta-design such as the one in this study must tailor the CPDL experience, not only to practically offer best practice provision, but to account also for

the CPDL deficiencies which the existing CPDL system suffers from and reinforces in teachers' CPDL practices and attitudes.

### 6.3.2 *Conclusion 2: Language of Critique*

This research adds the voice of the CTs to those captured by O'Grady (2017) and Hall *et al.* (2018), reinforcing that the aspirations of the Teaching Council to reconceptualize SP have yet to be fully shared or realised on the ground. This work confirms that the capacity of a CT to convert engagement, from what they perceive to be potentially transformative CPDL, to positive outcomes, can be stifled by the defensive (Argyris, 1995; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Achinstein and Davis, 2014), unstructured and unsupportive routines of their SP partnership (Conway *et al.,* 2011; O'Grady, 2017). Their drive to adopt the guidelines, grow as mentor 'coaches' and promote a SP culture, can be undermined by under-conforming SP partners such as the PST, UT, other CTs and school management, who are invariably unaware, overwhelmed, disinterested, insecure, anxious, reticent, sceptical and resistant about SP processes. The presentation of complex interrelated barriers associated with the existing culture, structures, and relationships (Cooper *et al.,* 2016) can culminate in CTs' efforts being blocked, ignored, dismissed, insulted, taken for granted, delegitimized both symbolically and literally and undermined. Such complex 'roadblocks' (Parker *et al.,* 2012) can cause procedural confusion for the PST and relational tensions for the mentoring relationship, leading to the PST being dismissive, defensive and / or opting out of the mentoring process. Though CTs brought with them a dissatisfaction about the way things were done (Serrano-García, 1994), in the face of seemingly powerful barriers, they also displayed attitudes of passive adaptation (Carlson *et al.,* 2006) and submissiveness (Seranno- García, 1994); expressed a poor sense of political efficacy to affect change (Watts *et al.,* 2011) and demonstrated a low level of critical motivation to try (Diemer *et al.,* 2017). Whilst this study responded to the call to better identify the complex

barriers to teachers' CPDL growth (McMillan *et al.*, 2016; Hendriks and Scheerens, 2010; Wermke, 2010), it also acted upon Armour *et al.*'s (2015) advice to address them. Though researchers have been accused of using complexity theory for merely retrospective description purposes (Rahman *et al.,* 2014), this research used complexity thinking prospectively to support transformation (Morrison, 2008; Cochran-Smith *et al.* 2014) and also to prevent the washout (Zeichner, 1987) of capacity, quality, change and to ensure that CPDL efforts and resources were not wasted (Poekert *et al.,* 2016). This was achieved by developing CTs' fluency in the 'language of critique' (Shotter and Gustavsen, 1999). As they engaged in the socio-analytical PALAR processes of problematization, CTs identified and explored the nature of problems (Dworski-Riggs and Day Langhout, 2016) and identified who presented them (Zuber-Skerrit, 2013). In so doing, a productive political agitation swelled (Mirra *et al.,* 2016), with CTs becoming less willing to accept those power asymmetries, which impeded their efforts (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015). Enhanced critical motivation to overcome these barriers (Diemer *et al.,* 2017) led the CTs to transition from the 'submissive' level of critical consciousness, whereby they perceived the complex barriers to their CPDL as being normal and unchangeable; to the 'pre-critical level', whereby their dissatisfaction with their social reality was accompanied with the growing belief that change should indeed occur (Serrano-García, 1994).

### 6.3.3 *Conclusion 3: Language of Possibility*

This research proposes that though that the barriers to CPDL implementation cannot be overcome unless the teacher is first critically conscious enough to recognise them (Watts *et al.,* 1999; Carlson *et al.,* 2006), this noble pursuit runs the risk of overwhelming CTs who already feel dispirited (Sparkes *et al*. 1990; Watts *et al.,* 2011) about the mammoth task of implementing their CPDL back at school (Girvan *et al.,* 2016) in the face of inertia and resistance, particularly given the power challenges associated with the marginality of their

subject (Anicich *et al.*, 2016; Sparkes *et al.,* 1990). This study proves the claim that the natural emergence of powerfully transformative processes and outcomes cannot occur unless CPDL designers acknowledge that CPDL should be a moral and social justice enterprise (Cochran *et al.,* 2014; Rahman *et al.,* 2014). With its expression of critical theory, the meta-model adopted the ethical responsibility to counteract the potential impact of 'learned hopelessness' by counterbalancing it with positive effects of 'learned hopefulness' (Zimmerman, 1990). Engagement in PALAR processes such as problem exploration, problem solving, goaling and re-goaling (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) infused by critical theory (Habermas, 1972) and hope theory (Snyder *et al.,* 2003), fostered in the CTs a 'language of possibility' (Shotter and Gustaven, 1999). As they developed a coping intelligence (Srivastava and Tang, 2015) and problem solving mindset (Draper *et al.,* 2011) to persist in the face of dilemmas, CTs began to see challenges as opportunities (Poekert *et al.,* 2016). Transitioning from the 'pre-critical' to the 'critical integrative' level of consciousness, CTs analysed and judged power asymmetries as unjust (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010) and became critically motivated to initiate the design of a plan for change (Serrano-García, 1994). Despite being more critically conscious of the challenges ahead, CTs felt more optimistic about their CPDL prospects (Cooper *et al.,* 2016) and more prepared to send out ripples of change into the SP system (Argyris and Schön, 1974; Zuber-Skerritt, 2013).

### 6.3.4 *Conclusion 4: Language of Leadership for Change and Empowerment*

This study addresses previously underexplored and unfocused conceptualisation of power in embedded CPDL (Newman, 2012; Howie and Bagnall, 2013). Whilst CTs in this study became hopeful about and planned for CPDL implementation, the meta-model's embedded SP feature, with its 'disorienting dilemmas' (Taylor and Laros, 2014) and 'productive tensions' (Poekert *et al.,* 2016), provided the space to convert their capability as

'able' mentors to mentors with an 'ableness' to grow in the face of inertia and resistance (Pansardi, 2012). CPDL models typically fail to address that knowledge of what to do, is not always accompanied by the courage required to do it (Mirra *et al.*, 2016). However, the individual and community empowerment accrued through the PALAR M-CoP were considered to be vital pre-requisites (Teare, 2013) for the CTs to take that leap from 'critical motivation' to 'critical action' (Diemer *et al.*, 2017). Through 'power of enactment' (Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2011) cycles, CTs transcended to a liberating level of critical consciousness (Serrano-García, 1996). PALAR processes[71] imbued with critical democratic theory philosophies[72] supported in CTs a complex systems mindset (Kools and Stoll, 2017) as well as a capacity to analyse socio-political conditions (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010) and the attribution of power (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). Balancing the promotion of pragmatism with ambition, CTs enacted diplomatically and judiciously selected critical actions for particular SP partners and purposes (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). They did so, on the basis of how legitimately their authority would be received (Gordon, 2009), as well as how cooperative and powerful the SP partners were. Adopting the philosophy of power 'as' empowerment, the CTs used various power modes e.g. individualist, constitutive, strategic, bureaucratic (Rye, 2015), forms e.g. thin and thick (Thomas, 2011), and types e.g. power 'to' (Haugaard, 2012; Rye, 2015), 'with' and (Allen, 1999; Rye, 2015) 'through' (McDaid, 2010; Rye, 2015). Cascading diplomatic experiences forward, CTs used their 'power to', as a productive force, to invest in, enable and empower (Thomas, 2011; Rye, 2015) cooperative SP partners to become clearer and more confident about their SP role, as has been called for (Young and MacPhail, 2015). Power 'to' was also executed to persuade and appeal to somewhat uncooperative colleagues to engage by using short term, indirect and developmental

[71] Such as: conflict management, change management, presentation, celebration and evaluation.
[72] Informed by the perspectives of Paulo Freire, John Dewey, Antonio Gramsci to name a few proponents

approaches in order to prevent social conflict (Pigg, 2002); whilst using thicker forms of power (Thomas, 2011) to put pressure upon the most uncooperative of partners. CTs' success at engaging colleagues was an important outcome given the acceptance that teachers in Ireland tend to have difficulty with, and a fear of change (O'Grady, 2017; Gleeson, 2012; Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). Whilst a degree of success was reached using this power type to construct critical actions, psychological empowerment encouraged CTs to use their power 'to harness power 'with' (Angelique *et al.,* 2013) and 'through' others (Pansardi, 2012). They zoned in on the potential shared interests of powerful and influential partners (Pigg, 2002; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) and used their bartering capacity to gain recognition as 'legitimate knowers' of mentoring (McNiff, 2013). This backing served to legitimise their authority as mentor leaders (Lawlor, 2015; Cooper *et al.,* 2016), easing their cultural, structural and relational pathways to CPDL implementation. Whilst research generally accepts that the organisation can mediate CPDL outcomes, this research offers that a CPDL meta-model such as the one in this study, can influence the environment and those in it (Boylan *et al.,* 2018). With its interacting and interdependent PALAR processes, CPDL pedagogies and languages, CTs' development as "agent[s] of social transformation" (Sant, 2019, p. 674) resulted in 'second order change', as multiple partners affected and were affected by innovative, reinforcive and transformative power outcomes (Avelino, 2017). On account of CTs' critical actions and interactions, other CTs and UTs, particularly from PE departments, engaged more fully and more meaningfully in educative, developmental mentoring and shared supervision processes. Consequently, as per critical democracy theory (Hantzopoulos, 2015 cited in Sant, 2019), with: hierarchies somewhat challenged; power imbalances partially set straight and relational disturbances predominantly removed, the triad was functioning as "a 'thick' normative democracy" (Sant, 2019, p. 674). With anxieties alleviated, UTs and PSTs were more open to engaging with the CT, who came to be valued as a centrally positioned member

of the triad. This work proposes that whilst the CPDL meta-model empowered the CTs at the individual, community and organisational levels (Zimmerman, 2000), the teachers' growth as mentor leaders and teacher educators contributed to the empowerment not only of the PALAR M-CoP and its members but also their schools (Linden *et al.,* 2000; Joo and Hyun-Shim, 2010) and the SP partnership. As developing change-agents (King, 2014; 2016), so long as they were sowing seeds of empowerment and change (Dworski-Riggs and Day-Langhout, 2010) and ultimately making a difference for themselves and others (Yukl and Becker, 2006; Poekert *et al.,* 2016), they were fulfilled in their CPDL journey and held an ambitious vision for the future (Poekert *et al.,* 2016).

Given the sea-change in professional expectations for CTs in Ireland, it was important to ask: "What would happen if cooperating teachers actively inquired into and took greater responsibility for their own professional development?" (Clarke *et al.* 2012, p. 168). It is proposed that this study offers an important and timely answer.

### *6.4 Study Limitations*

Upon reflection of this research study, I plan to take George Bernard Shaw's advice that "success does not consist in never making mistakes but in never making the same one a second time".

As recognised by Luttrell (2010) "shortcoming[s] reside in the fact that the research did not adequately reflect multiple perspectives" (p. 68). As participation was self-selected by CTs who demonstrated an interest and commitment to the domain, it is clear that their perceptions "may not be typical of the views held by their peers" (O'Grady, 2017, p. 150). Due to the scope

of the study, “the voices of other school-based stakeholders” were not sought (O’Grady, 2017, p. 150). As such, there is a lack of triangulation regarding CTs’ perceptions, particularly in relation to reported outcomes for other stakeholders (Hales, 2015, p. 168).

Reasonable limitations include “the time constraints that impinged upon teacher engagement” (Brennan, 2017, p. 207). At times, setting and agreeing dates for the attendance of all CTs was challenging, due to “the sheer business of the CTs” (Reuchakul *et al.,* 2015). As such, “the data could be said to not represent the entire CoP as not all members participated in all activities or to the same degree” (Clonan, 2017, p. 209).

As acknowledged in the methodology chapter, I adopted an insider-outsider position within the study. I also adopted multiple roles. Though not uncommon with this type of research strategy (Smith *et al.*, 2010), my journal reflection below expresses that I found striking a balance to be challenging:

> It is easy to be one thing to people at one time e.g. CPD[L] provider or CoP facilitator or research facilitator. However...being all things to ‘all’ people is even more difficult. I doubt they will all equally accept me putting my research hat on. To balance this requires a keen and skilled eye. In this, I am less experienced.

Based on this, I may have influenced CTs’ depth of research participation because ‘I’ perceived them to be less willing initially.

## *6.5 Recommendations for Practice, Policy and Research*

The findings of this study prompt a number of important interconnected recommendations for practice, policy and research. Recommendations are presented with specific stakeholders in mind. Whilst these recommendations are drawn from the findings, further data is offered affording CTs a voice in the recommendation process. Given the participatory nature of the study, this is considered to be appropriate and right.

*HEIs and SP Partners*

As this work reinforced, SP experiences have a greater potential to be transformative when all SP partners contribute as they should, including but not limited to CTs, PSTs, UTs and principals. As recommended by the CTs, CPDL meta-models such as the one in this study should be extended to all SP partners, in order to facilitate each partner to grow in their role, to value the contribution of other partners and indeed, to empower and be empowered by one another. Moreover, given the flexible nature of the meta-design, there is the potential to adapt, scale up, and transfer the PALAR CoP meta-model for all subjects and pedagogical specialisms, across all educational sectors (primary, post-primary, and further education) and through both ITE and postgraduate routes. CT also suggested that "provid[ing] certification" (Niamh, FG1) for CPDL engagement "could help" to entice principals to engage more (Aidan, FG1).

Teacher Education Departments or Institutes of Education must ensure that they are aware of and champion the quality SP research and CPDL programmes which exist within their institution. There is a great wealth of expertise and partnership with CTs already in existence,

which has not been tapped into. For example, despite the findings of this research being disseminated locally, nationally and internationally, Hall *et al.'s* (2018) review of SP did not reflect that the host HEI had made the review researchers aware of the PALAR M-CoP programme's work. HEIs are not a cultural vacuum saved from complex issues of power and politics. Despite the rhetoric, the community approach within HEIs is accused of being "splintered and shrinking" (Kosnik *et al.,* 2020, p. 18). MacPhail *et al.* (2018) add that HEI-based teacher educators expressed a "fear of competition and judgmental attitudes" and that there were not many opportunities to learn from one another (p. 859). These issues need to be acknowledged and addressed in order to narrow the gap between partnership rhetoric and reality, so that best practice can be presented, celebrated, evaluated and adopted as widely as possible.

*School Leaders*

As Sean stressed, principals needed to raise their expectations and to make staff accountable for engaging appropriately. He suggested that they should say: "'Would you like someone to take your class? If so, we'd like you to do a, b, c' and if they say: 'I'm pretty stressed with…': [then they should say] 'okay don't worry about it'" (M-CoP3). Moreover, as Caroline recommended, principals should "drive a whole school approach" and "come up with a policy to support" a SP culture (M-CoP3). They further suggested that "some 'Croke Park' hours" be used to support CTs' growth by offering "a mentoring workshop" (Caroline, M-CoP3).

Principals must formally acknowledge and support the hard work and CPDL efforts of engaged CTs and use their power 'to' enable their growth as mentor leaders. Aidan's recommendation reflects the community's position. He suggested that "the most beneficial way of getting things

done is that people have time to do them" (GF1). He insisted that "a reduced timetable" is necessary (FG1). Describing the circumstances of a teacher friend in the UK, Aidan explained how this structural change can be capacity building: "Like a foreman of a carpentry shop, he mightn't build anything anymore but he has 10 people building to a higher standard and gets more done, like this [CPDL] is" doing (M-CoP3).

School leaders cannot merely be expected to know how to change professional cultures (Brennan, 2017) or know how to empower leadership behaviours in their staff (Yukl and Becker, 2006). As such, they must be provided with the support to learn (Fitzpatrick, 2018) through for example, 'The Centre for School Leadership' (2017), whose mission it is to "ensure the provision of high quality professional development opportunities for aspiring and serving school leaders" (p. 11).

*Teaching Council, DES, Inspectorate and Unions*

To borrow the ASTI's "equal pay for equal work" slogan, for ITE CTs performing their role beside Induction 'mentors', there should be 'equal recognition for equal engagement'. Otherwise, it is highly inequitable to accept that CTs, such as those in this study, are performing mentoring responsibilities in line with the SP guidelines, and committing voluntarily to engage in long-term transformative CPDL. They should receive the title of 'SP mentor'. CTs asserted that their CPDL should be recognised as a legitimate activity, not only by principals, but also by the Teaching Council (2016) through the 'Cosán Framework for Teacher Learning' and by the DES through the 'Croke Park' discretionary hours list of activities. It is illogical to accept that "appropriate structures, resources and processes, including [the] training of mentors, time for meetings with mentors, [and] peer observation" (Teaching Council, 2011, p. 18) are

"essential to the provision of" induction, but not of ITE SP. Not for the first time, it is recommended that the 'Continuum of Teacher Education' (Teaching Council, 2011) policy be revised to reflect a more equal investment in the mentoring process across all phases, and not merely for Induction (Droichead).

Whilst the introduction of the Cosán 'Framework for Teacher Learning' was welcomed (Teaching Council, 2016), there are some tensions surrounding the framework paving the way for the renewal of teacher registration being reliant upon engagement in CPDL. If teachers are to be mandated to engage, then it is incumbent upon the Teaching Council to ensure that CPDL provision is transformative. Historically, there has been a temptation to reach for the tidy package of centrally pre-designed models, which are evaluated through the collection of attendance targets and meeting pre-determined outcomes (Rahman *et al.,* 2014). It is strongly suggested that Teaching Council uses the framework to endorse that whilst investment should be top-down, the design and evolutions of models should be bottom up, and tailored for in "local, innovative and creative way[s]" (Fitzpatrick, 2018, p. 10). It is proposed that "regional hubs", such as the Education and Training Boards, should be supported to facilitate and accredit such an approach (Fitzpatrick, 2018, p. 10).

The DES reinstated 'posts of responsibility' in 2018, acknowledging the importance of "empower[ing] staff to take on and carry out leadership roles" (p. 5). CTs in this study recommended that a 'post of responsibility' be introduced for mentoring and SP. They indicated that whilst such a post would be a "massive job", it would be "really beneficial to more kids going forward in the future and [for] all our schools" (Aidan, FG1).

From a CT perspective, this research promotes O'Grady's (2017) suggestion that if a partnership approach to SP is to be embraced, the Inspectorate should fulfil their obligations to teacher education, as set out in the 'Education Act' (1998). They should be involved in the evaluation of mentoring and SP provision, reporting on teacher education practices, as well as teaching and learning practices. Findings from this work suggest that such a shift would further legitimise and raise the profile of SP and mentoring within schools. It is proposed that, with quality assurance of SP provision prioritised, developmental plans would be re-adjusted to better enhance SP and mentoring cultures, processes, structures and relationships.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there are some benefits associated with the protectionist approach of the teacher unions in Ireland, the CTs' criticisms reflect the previously reported position that unions' decisions do not always consider or value the personal and professional development of the teacher, subsequently suffocating desired opportunities for growth (Poole, 2000; Stevenson, 2014). Ellen suggested that unions needed to provide more "support, in terms of" not imposing "a blanket ban" on transformative CPDL activities (FG1). She added that deeper "consideration [be] given to" mentoring and SP, given the fact that people want to do these kind of things" (FG1).

*CPDL Model Designers and Facilitators*

It is acknowledged that whilst it may be impossible for CPDL facilitators to hold any control over local roadblocks (Parker *et al.,* 2012) which affect the outcomes of CPDL for CTs (Rahman *et al.,* 2014); this does not excuse CPDL model designers, facilitators and researchers from ignoring that influential factors and agents do exist (Cochran-Smith *et al.,* 2014). Until CPDL models are designed to develop fluencies in the languages of critique, possibility and

leadership for empowerment and change, CPDL outcomes will continue to be superficial and / or will continue to be washed out. CPDL designers are charged to step into the unknown and embrace the messy, complicated, uncomfortable and uncertain world of meta-design. Only then will they be capable of facilitating the natural emergence of powerfully transformative processes and outcomes (Cochran *et al.,* 2014; Rahman *et al.,* 2014).

Given the findings of this study, Ussher's (2010) adaptation of the proverb "it will take a whole school to educate a teacher" (p. 103) requires expansion. It is recommended that 'it will take a whole partnership to empower a mentor'. Whilst the lion's share of the CPDL contribution has fallen at the door of HEIs, given the potential outlined in this study, it is argued that any centre, association and service who claims to support the CPDL of teachers, should contribute to mentoring and SP CPDL, sharing the responsibility and reinforcing one another's efforts.

Given the major implications of societal changes, as well as the growing threat of pandemics which present significant challenges (Burke and Dempsey, 2020), CPDL may fall down in the list of educational priorities. Alternately, teachers have shared that, during 'lockdown', they have the "opportunity to continue with their CPD[L]" (Burke and Dempsey, 2020, p. 13). It is argued that a PALAR CoP should be tailored to reflect and support teachers with both complex issues and opportunities facing them (Madalińska-Michalak *et al.,* 2018). As adopted in this study, a 'multi-space' 'multi-technology' approach could be further expanded to develop and nurture the e-community dimension of a PALAR CoP.

*Researchers*

PALAR is recommended as a pedagogical strategy to re-engage teachers with research due to its highly democratic, evolving and participatory approach. Teachers must be "convinced

that their input will make a difference and that their community will benefit from the research" (Woods and Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 11). This should serve to narrow the gap between practice and research and help "to build bridges that can connect researchers and practitioners" (Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010, p. 303). Given the findings of this study, the Teaching Council should promote and support engagement in PALAR studies, through their Croí series of initiatives, which have been developed since this study was conducted, including: the John Coolahan Research Support Framework Award, Research MEET and e-Zine

### *6.6 Future Research*

I adopt Enright's (2010) hope "that the findings of this study will actively inform future research" (p. 204).

Parker and Patton (2017) called for further investigation into "the direct and indirect outcomes of CPD[L]" (p. 455). Whilst the CTs in this study reported that their CPDL engagement resulted in second order change and perceived benefits for PSTs, the UTs, other CTs and principals, it is prudent to conduct further research to seek the voices of such partners in order to investigate these claims. Research must also be conducted to investigate how PALAR CoPs could be used as a transformative CPDL avenue for all SP partners e.g. PSTs, UTs, all CTs and principals.

In the words of Kool and Stoll (2017), "this model is not intended to be fixed in stone" (p. 12). Given the potential benefits of the meta-design, it would be worthwhile investigating how PALAR M-CoPs could be transferred and scaled up to span each

phase of the continuum of teacher education and to include all subject and pedagogical specialisms. It would also be important to explore how the PALAR CoP meta-model could be transferred to other professions such as nursing, for example.

## *6.7 Concluding Remark*

Change is hard at the start,

messy in the middle,

and gorgeous at the end.

- Robin Sharma

# 7 Appendices

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# Mentoring communities of practice: what's in it for the mentor?

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to address the critique of researchers, who question the effectiveness and sustainability of mentoring as a continuing professional development and learning (CPDL) process. Where a lack of awareness exists surrounding the potential benefits of mentoring for the mentor, this paper investigates whether engaging in and with mentoring through a mentoring community of practice (M-CoP) assists mentors to accrue and realise the benefits of engagement. A relationship will be drawn between the community of practice (CoP) dimensions as outlined by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015): domain, practice and community, and the perceived benefits accrued for mentors will be reported.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A qualitative approach was taken, using a participatory action learning action research strategy. In total, 12 mentors came together to form a developing M-CoP. They attended four M-CoP workshops where they grew as mentors, through the three dimensions of a CoP: domain, practice and community. Workshops were audio visually recorded and observed. Further data were gathered through an M-CoP questionnaire, pre-workshop questions, M-CoP artefacts, stimulus recall, reflective journals, reflective journey plans and extended focus group discussions. Respondent validation, inter-rater and intra-observer reliability were used. Data were coded manually and using NVivo-10 software.

**Findings** – Many of the benefits reported were directly linked to participants' engagement in and with the three M-CoP dimensions: domain, practice and community. Such benefits related to mentor identity, support and solidarity, engagement and interaction, sharing "for" and learning "from" other mentors, and knowledge expansion and boundary spanning. Participants reported that engaging in and with mentor education through an M-CoP was an effective CPDL process, which was beneficial for them as developing mentors.

**Research limitations/implications** – The sample size was limited, based in one country and focussed upon one subject specialism. Such reported benefits need to be disseminated in order to raise the awareness of policy makers, teacher education institution managers and teacher educators, teachers and school leaders of the benefits of engaging in mentoring CPDL through the process of M-CoP engagement.

**Practical implications** – The findings from this study can be used to inform policies related to the continuum of teacher education. A recommendation is made for policy makers, teacher education institution managers, school leaders and CPDL service providers to facilitate the development of M-CoPs and to support their growth. It is also suggested that government departments of education and professional standards bodies account for the resourcing of such work in the design and implementation phase of school placement developments.

**Originality/value** – This paper closes the following gaps in the literature: CPDL benefits of engaging in and with an M-CoP for the mentor, the relationship between CPDL benefits and CoP dimensions and the development of M-CoPs in the given socio-cultural, historical and economic context of Ireland's teacher education system and those of similar contexts.

**Keywords** Benefits of mentoring communities of practice for mentors, Community of practice dimensions, Continuing professional development and learning, Mentoring communities of practice

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Mentoring is said to be "a profession-building endeavor" (Chambers *et al.*, 2012, p. 346). Though the majority of mentoring research focuses on mentee benefits (Crasborn *et al.*, 2010; Crutcher and Naseem, 2016), there is a growing research base supporting the learning potential of mentoring for the mentor (Hobson *et al.*, 2009). Almost two decades ago, McCorkel *et al.* (1998) posed the question "What's in it for the mentor?" (p. 93). Indeed, there are some who claim that mentors are not always aware of the potential benefits (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012; Tang and Choi, 2005). As Mooney Simmie and Moles (2011) suggested, it is important to consider wider mentoring literature in the light of the country's context, with all

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## B. List and Explanation of Relevant Research Strategies (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015, p. 7)

| Acronym | Key features and references |
|---|---|
| AL | Action learning means: asking fresh questions; learning from and with one another in sets or support groups; working together collaboratively on solving complex problems of mutual concern; sharing experiences, ideas, feelings; and critically reflecting on what works and what does not, how and how not, and why or why not. It aims to improve or change work practices and to create knowledge or understanding (Brockbank & McGill, 2007; Dotlich & Noel, 1998; Marquardt, 1999; McGill & Brockbank, 2004; Pedler, 1997, 2008; Revans, 1982). |
| LAL | Lifelong action learning integrates the concepts of action learning and lifelong learning. Active and transformational learning for life and not confined to childhood or the classroom, it is voluntary, self-motivated learning from our daily interactions with others, therefore ongoing. It enhances inclusion, active citizenship and personal, professional, and organisation or community development (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). |
| AR | Traditional or practical action research involves solving social problems individually or collaboratively, using a spiral of action research cycles (plan–act–observe–reflect) and making the results public. It integrates research and action, theory and practice, research and development, creating knowledge and improving practice (Lewin, 1946, 1948, 1951; McNiff, 2013; Reason & Bradbury, 2008, 2013; Stringer, 2013). |
| ALAR | Action learning action research is an integrated concept of inquiry, using AL processes and AR principles, following the same philosophy, paradigm, and methods in ALAR programs or projects. ALARA (www.alarassociation.org) is the ALAR association of international practitioners and scholars from diverse fields and sections of society (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009). ALARA publishes the ALAR Journal (http://journal.alara.net.au) and a series of monographs. |
| EAR | Educational AR aims to improve learning, teaching, curriculum, and administration at the primary and secondary school levels and in higher education, especially teacher, pre- and in-service training (Altrichter et al., 2000; Noffke & Somekh, 2009). The EAR Journal is available online at http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/reac20#.U7VQV7G4NsI |

| | |
|---|---|
| CAR | Collaborative AR is conducted by a group of people (not an individual) who work with or without a facilitator or educational researcher. CAR includes EAR but is also used in the health sciences, community development, and other fields (Goodnough, 2011). CARN (www.mmu.ac.uk/carn) is the international CAR network. |
| PAR | Participatory AR is like CAR but is always aiming at inclusion, social justice, and equality of CTs in the research. PAR originated in developing countries but then spread across the world. PAR is also an international network of scholars and practitioners from diverse fields and sections of society (Fals Borda, 1998; Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1972; Hunter *et al.,* 2013; Koch & Kralik, 2006; Reason & Bradbury, 2013). |
| CPAR | Critical participatory AR aims at social justice and CTs' emancipation—from a critical theorist perspective. It distinguishes between technical, practical, and critical AR (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, 2005; Kemmis *et al.,* 2014). |
| PALAR | PALAR is an integrated concept of ALAR and PAR and lifelong learning, aiming at positive social change for a just and better world for all human beings. Action leadership can be developed through PALAR (Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013; Zuber-Skerritt, 2011; Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). |
| AS | Action science is a combination of mainstream science and action research, improving practice through collaboration and reflective dialogue (Argyris *et al.,* 1985; Helskog, 2014; Raelin, 1997). AI Appreciative inquiry is a collaborative approach to studying and changing social systems such as groups, organisations, communities (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider *et al.,* 2008). |

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# Teacher mentoring and the reflective practitioner approach

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to focus on reflective mentoring practices. Teacher mentors are widely known to be an important catalyst for reflection. Through dialogue and professional conversations, teacher mentors can help their mentees to improve their teaching performance by facilitating their discussion of the praxis from different perspectives.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This qualitative mixed methods study is based on three separate studies from the Republic of Ireland, Malta and Norway involving: mentors of undergraduate student-teachers (U-M, *n*: 37); mentors of newly qualified teachers (NQT-M, *n*: 4); student-teachers (ST, *n*: 16); NQT, *n*: 8; and university tutors (UT, *n*: 8). In each study, mentors were provided with varying degrees of education on facilitating critical reflection for mentees. This study sought to draw out what reflective practices were being employed in mentoring across European contexts and what perceived impact they had. A cross-case analysis of data across the three countries was conducted using coding and constant comparison. Triangulation of data was employed across not only cases, but also across multiple methods data sets and across participant types.

**Findings** – All three studies reveal that mentoring approaches aiming to promote critical reflection have to be based on a developmental approach towards mentoring. They also have to challenge traditional hierarchical relationships and involve a commitment to collaborative, inquiry-oriented approaches towards mentoring.

**Research limitations/implications** – By bringing different studies of reflection in mentoring practices together, it is possible to gain new knowledge on mentoring in teacher education. However, being a cross-country, cross-context and cross-cultural approach in itself contains certain restrictions.

**Originality/value** – The authors of this paper propose that professional forms of inquiry depend on the type of relationship and collaboration forged between the teacher mentor and mentee. A cross-case analysis approach provided evidence of reflective practice, which is common across three European countries and offers a snapshot of trends.

**Keywords** Relationships, Mentoring, Inquiry, Teacher education, Reflection

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to explore mentoring as a dialectical relationship based on reflection in three different contexts. As teacher educators we, the authors, all have the responsibility of working with and educating mentors who support teachers, either in initial teacher education (ITE) or as part of their induction or further development. A recent experience which gave us the opportunity to present our research together in a symposium during a teacher education conference triggered our intention of investigating and understanding the similarities which transcend three contexts in Ireland, Malta and Norway.

Mentoring is defined in a number of ways. Using a phenomenological perspective on mentoring, Roberts (2000) reviewed mentoring research and debates (between 1978 and 1999) across several disciplines. He identified some essential attributes that characterised mentoring: "a supportive relationship; a helping process; a teaching-learning process; a reflective process; a career development process; a formalized process; and a role constructed

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## D. Mapping Original Questions to Evolved Research Questions and Evolved Research Questions to Post-correction Questions

'Evolved Research Questions'

| *Main Research Question* |
|---|
| **1.** "*In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"* |
| *Research Sub-Questions* |
| **2.** What benefits do CTs experience when seeking to engage in a PALAR M-CoP? |
| **3.** Does a PALAR M-CoP act as an effective vehicle for experiencing high quality CPDL characteristics and if so, which characteristics? |
| **4.** What barriers do CTs experience when seeking to engage in a PALAR M-CoP and which stakeholders contribute to these barriers? |
| **5.** Does engaging in a PALAR M-CoP help cooperating teachers to overcome barriers and what strategies can they employ to achieve this? |
| **6.** Does engagement in and with a PALAR M-CoP raise CTs' critical consciousness and empower them to enact change for themselves and others? |
| **7**. Does engagement in and with a PALAR blur the line between CPDL and research, improve teachers' impression of and engagement in research processes? |

**Research Questions Submitted for Ethics**

**Main research question:** In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for PE pre-service teachers through engagement in a mentoring CoP?

**Research Sub-Questions:**

1. What are the enablers, benefits and barriers when seeking to develop effective professional mentors in one school-university partnership?

2. Can a ‘communities of practice’ approach help the cooperating teachers in the case study to overcome potential school barriers to engaging in mentoring practice?
3. Does engagement in the participatory action research mentoring CoP support wider professional development for the case study teachers?
4. What are the implications of this research for attempts to develop the role of cooperating teachers as effective professional ‘mentors’ in PE teacher education in Ireland?

**Original Research Questions Mapped to Evolved Research Questions**

| *Main Research Question* | *Alignment to Original Questions* |
|---|---|
| ***1. "In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"*** | - This is the same question. Phrased differently<br>-All Sub-questions contribute to answering this main research question |
| ***Research Sub-Questions*** | ***Alignment to Original Sub-Questions*** |
| ***2. What benefits do CTs experience when seeking to engage in a PALAR M-CoP?*** | - Partially answers the main question<br>- Partially answers question 1<br>- Partially answers question 4 |
| ***3. Does a PALAR M-CoP act as an effective vehicle for experiencing high quality CPDL characteristics and if so, which characteristics?*** | - Partially answers the main question<br>- Partially answers question 1 (re: benefits)<br>- Partially answers question 4 |
| ***4. What barriers do CTs experience when seeking to engage in a PALAR M-CoP and which stakeholders contribute to these*** | - Partially answers the main question<br>- Partially answers question 1 (re: barriers) |

| | |
|---|---|
| ***barriers?*** | - Partially answers question 4 |
| ***5. Does engaging in a PALAR M-CoP help cooperating teachers to overcome barriers and what strategies can they employ to achieve this?*** | - Partially answers the main question<br>- This is the same as question 3 with "*and what strategies can they employ to achieve this?"* added<br>- Partially answers question 4 |
| ***6. Does engagement in and with a PALAR M-CoP raise CTs' critical consciousness and empower them to enact change for themselves and others?*** | - Partially answers the main question<br>- Partially answers question 1<br>- Partially answers question 2<br>- Partially answers question 3<br>- Partially answers question 4 |
| ***7. Does engagement in and with a PALAR blur the line between CPDL and research, improve teachers' impression of and engagement in research processes?*** | - Partially answers the main question<br>- Partially answers question 1<br>- Partially answers question 2<br>- Partially answers question 3<br>- Partially answers question 4 |

**Evolved Research Questions Mapped against Formal Questions**

***Main research question:***

*"In the contemporary education context in Ireland, can cooperating teachers [CTs] be developed as effective professional 'mentors' for physical education [PE] pre-service teachers [PSTs], through engagement in and with a participatory action learning action research [PALAR] mentoring community of practice [M-CoP]?"*

***Formal research questions***

1. Can a PALAR M-CoP act as a transformative CPDL vehicle for CTs' growth as mentors and if so, what elements of the CPDL model support growth?

2. What barriers to CTs' CPDL does the Irish context present?

3. How can engagement in a PALAR M-CoP support CTs to cope with the challenges of complex barriers and empower them to overcome such barriers to their growth?

| ***Evolved Research Questions*** | ***Formal Research Questions*** |
|---|---|
| *1. What benefits do CTs experience when seeking to engage in a PALAR M-CoP?* | *Partially answer questions 1, 2 and 3.* |
| *2. Does a PALAR M-CoP act as an effective vehicle for experiencing high quality CPDL characteristics and if so, which characteristics?* | *Partially answers questions 1, 2 and 3.* |
| *3. What barriers do CTs experience when seeking to engage in a PALAR M-CoP and which stakeholders contribute to these barriers?* | *Answers predominantly question 2* |
| *4. Does engaging in a PALAR M-CoP help cooperating teachers to overcome barriers and what strategies can they employ to achieve this?* | *Answers predominantly question 3* |
| *5. Does engagement in and with a PALAR M-CoP raise CTs' critical consciousness and empower them to enact change for themselves and others?* | *Answers predominantly question 2 and 3* |
| *6. Does engagement in and with a PALAR blur the line between CPDL and research, improve teachers' impression of and engagement in research processes?* | *Answers predominantly question 1, and partially question 2 and 3.* |

## E. Information Meeting Letter

Dear Cooperating PE Teachers,

Thanks once again for agreeing to act as a COPET for a (Institution name removed for anonymity reasons) Pre-service Teacher. I hope that they are working hard and settling in well. Thanks for all the support you are giving. We really appreciate your role and your input into the teacher education process.

As you are aware, we are now launching "*COPET-Plus*", the second phase of the COPET programme. We would very much like you to be involved in this phase. This phase is part of a PhD study, which is explained overleaf on the "Participant Information Sheet". It is an exciting professional development opportunity for COPETs and is considered best practice. It is very personalized, raises your knowledge and skills regarding self and colleague evaluation and can be engaged in and with at a pace and depth that you personally can cope with.

Wanting to develop a teacher education partnership, we are inviting all cooperating PE teachers to take part and as such, if there are numerous PE teachers in the department supervising the pre-service teacher, then we would like them also to engage with the study.

We would like to invite each of you to an information meeting on Monday 10th of March at 7pm in (Institution name removed for anonymity reasons) (see map enclosed). This will allow you to ask questions or seek clarification. However, if you have any questions between now and then, don't hesitate to contact me (details removed for anonymity reasons). Refreshments will be served on arrival. To assist in this, could you please confirm your attendance by Monday 12 noon. Thanks in advance for your support and we look forward to getting you all together.

Kind regards,

_____

Eimear Holland

PE School Placement & COPET Coordinator

## F. Participant Information Sheet

**Study Title:** *"Developing the Role of Cooperating Teachers as 'Mentors' in Physical Education Teacher Education in Ireland: A Participatory Action Research Project".*

**Study Purpose**: The purpose of the study is to investigate if there are professional development benefits to COPETs engaging in a mentoring community of practice as co-researchers. Whilst there is research to support engagement in both mentoring and communities of practice, we wish to investigate if and how this might be developed in the Irish context in the current socio-political and economic climate. If benefits and indeed challenges and / or barriers to such a development are reported, these will be used to inform policy regarding what is required for such effective CPD to be realized in Ireland.

**Why you:** Firstly, your school has agreed to supervise placement/s this coming year. This makes you eligible. Through personal conversations, feedback from University Tutors and / Pre-service Teachers etc, you have been identified as a promising cooperating teacher and as such; you are ready for the next stage which is the 'Cooperating PE Teacher [COPET] Plus Programme'. You are under no obligation to become involved. You will still be eligible to be a COPET for our pre-service teachers and all the previous supports and benefits of doing so will remain. We are always here to assist you in your developing role and welcome your feedback.

**Study Description:** This study will involved the COPET Programme Coordinator working and learning alongside other COPETs in a mentoring community of practice. As co-researchers and community members we will support one through the cyclical process of:

- reflecting on where we are in our development and how we got here
- sharing what we know and learn
- identifying where we wish to take our development
- target setting what we hope to achieve (in the next month or in the next year depending on how busy you are)
- deciding on an appropriate action to reach our potential
- evaluating if proposed actions worked and being able to articulate why and if not, what barriers and challenges prevented us from reaching our targets
- adjusting the plan of action slightly based on greater insight

This will all happen over a minimum of 3 mentoring professional development workshops, which will span over a year. When they take place (though it would make sense to spread them out) and how long they last (perhaps 2 hours) and where they take place (the University is always an option or you could host us in your school) will all be negotiated by the community together. There will be shared objectives for the community, which we will also negotiate but individual objectives will also be central.

**What you will do, if you consent:** You will:

- engage in and with the inquiry process described above, learning more about mentoring and applying what you learn
- attend 3 workshops and engage in workshop activities
- agree to these workshops being observed (and video recorded to allow for better observation later as the researcher is a co-researcher with you and will find it difficult to learn and observe at the same time)
- agree to artifacts and documents created in workshops being used as a basis for discussion as data itself i.e. mind-maps etc
- agree to keep a learning journal to make accounts of things that work and do not work and why; and what you think of the process
- agree to complete a questionnaire which gathers information about your professional background and perceptions and experiences with a) CPD generally; b) mentoring and c) communities of practice. You will later be asked to revise this i.e. has anything changed?
- agree to answer a few pre-group questions so that you can decide what you think before the workshops
- agree to take part in a focus group discussion, which will be audio-recorded, after the study has come to an end
- engage only as best you can. If you are have a lot of other commitments (home, school, professional etc), then only set manageable targets. Realism has to be central to this study.

**If you consent:** anything you say or do will remain confidential. Any data generated will be securely stored for 10 years, with access only to me, the project supervisor (Professor Kathleen Armour, University of Birmingham), a critical colleague who will check that I am being true to the data and its analysis (Dr. Michelle Dillon). The data will be destroyed after 10 years. You can withdraw from the study without any repercussions. You can withdraw from the study, at any time up to a month after participation ceases i.e. after the focus group discussion. If you withdraw within this timeframe, your data will be removed from the study and destroyed unless you explicitly consent to it being used. As co-researchers, I will provide a summary of data analysis at different junctures to ensure that my interpretation is reflective of both individual and group contributions. Moreover, final findings will be shared via a summary report.

**What to expect:** It is expected that co-researchers will:

- become more aware of their tacit knowledge, articulating and rationalising what they know and can do
- consider theirs and others' contexts and practice adapting old and apply new knowledge and skills to other contexts
- identify socio-political, cultural and economic challenges and barriers and consider how they might continue to develop within these parameters
- gain advanced mentoring skills and develop a deeper understanding about how to be an effective mentor
- reflect more critically, turning reflection into action which benefits them, their mentee and potentially their pupils

- reevaluate their perspectives and attitudes and become more comfortable with self-evaluation
- increase their support and CPD network

There will be an information evening on Monday 10th of March at 7pm in (details removed for anonymity reasons) (see map enclosed). This will allow you to ask questions or seek clarification. However, if you have any questions between now and then, don't hesitate to contact me (details removed for anonymity reasons)

Kind regards,

_____

Eimear Holland

PE School Placement & COPET Coordinator

## G. Consent Form

Study Title: *"Developing the Role of Cooperating Teachers as 'Mentors' in Physical Education Teacher Education in Ireland: A Participatory Action Research Project".*

Fair Processing Statement: This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with cooperating physical education teachers working together as co-researchers in the development of a mentoring community of practice. This study will be conducted by the (Institution name removed for anonymity reasons) (in collaboration with the University of Birmingham). The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research and statistical purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of consent:

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving any reason. I can withdraw from the study at any time, up to a month after participation ceases i.e. after the focus group discussion. If I withdraw within this timeframe, my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed, unless I provide explicit formal consent for it to be used.
- I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I understand that workshops will be video-recorded and that the focus group discussion will be audio-recorded.

Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant: ..... Date..... Signature.....

Name of researcher: ..... Date..... Signature.....

## H. Group Agreement for Obtaining Confidentially

This form is intended to further ensure confidentiality of data obtained during the course of the study entitled: "Developing the Role of Cooperating Teachers as 'Mentors' in Physical Education Teacher Education in Ireland: A Participatory Action Research Project".

All parties involved in this research, including all focus group discussion and workshop members, are asked to read the following statement and sign their names indicating that they agree to comply.

> *I hereby affirm that when discussing this study, I will speak only in generalities about issues raised and will not attribute any comments made to specific individuals.*

*Name:* _____

*Signature:* _____

*Study Researcher/s Signature:* _____

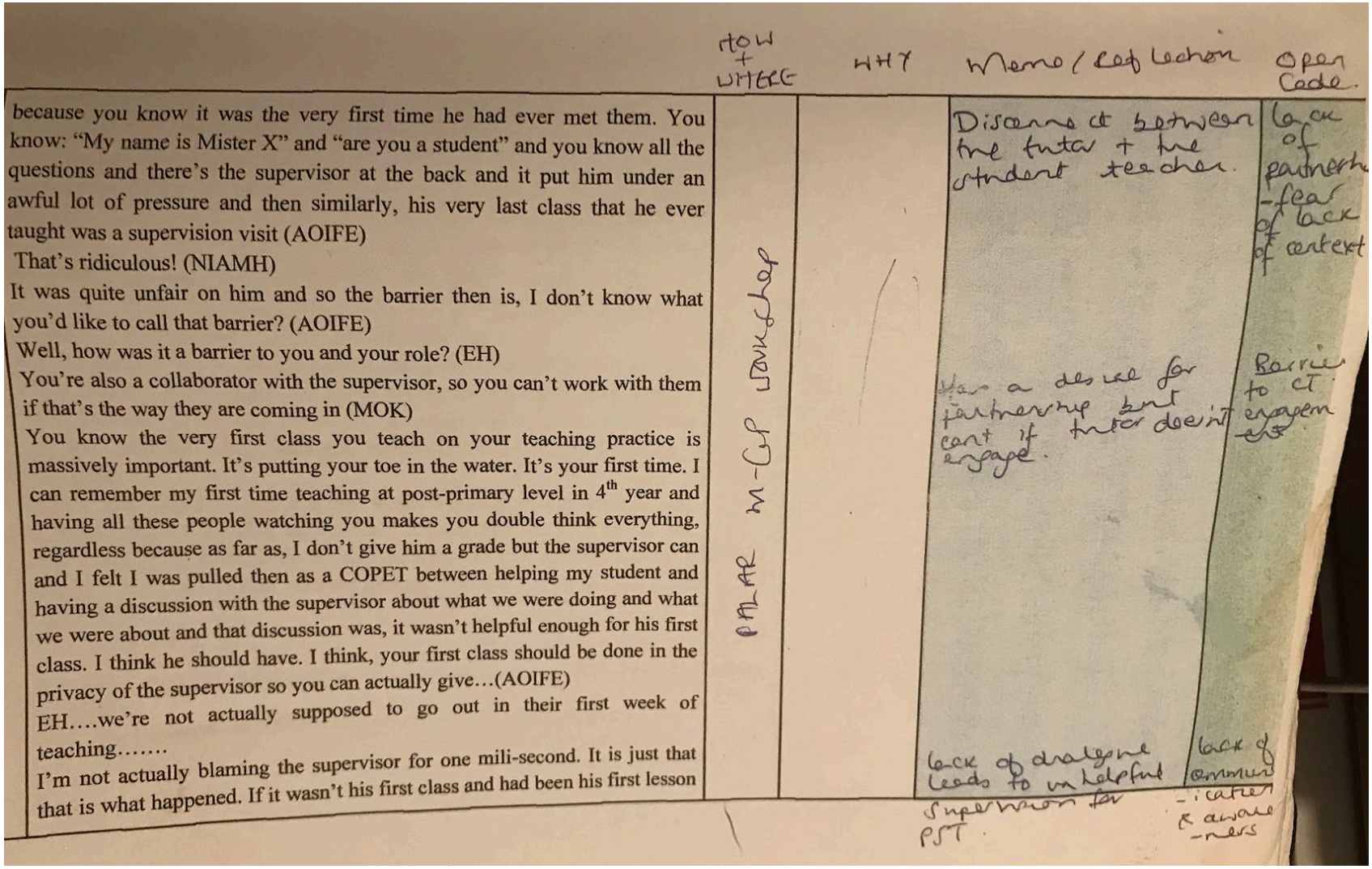
## I. PALAR M-CoP Workshop Outline

| Indicative Content | PALAR Process | PALAR Activity Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| **a) What is your dream for your engagement in COPET+** | 1. Defining project goals and mission<br>2. Setting Priorities | • ***Ideal scenario, Pile Sorting and Ranking:*** Based on CoP dreams, each COPET+ must write what they feel were the main 3 dreams on a post-it. Move post-its around into common piles and identify which ones are most common, placing those most common on top and those least common on the bottom<br>• ***Time Capsule:*** each pace their dream (as above) and fears or concerns (on the back of the post-it) inside their time capsule. Can share if they wish. Will review at the next workshop and perhaps share next time. |
| **b) What the role of a mentoring COPET is i.e. roles, responsibilities** | 1. Defining project goals and mission<br>2. Setting Priorities | • ***Semi-free listing:*** Look at cards with roles on them.<br>• ***Ranking:*** In 3's order them top (most important) to bottom (least important)<br>• Each group are then allocated one role from the top 3s.<br>• ***Tree Mapping & Free Listing:*** On the back of the role, write down responsibilities associated with that role.<br>• 1 person is nominated to share with the CoP<br>• Any thoughts?<br>• Would you add any roles, which were not there? (Share other roles from literature on prezi)<br>• ***Identity Wall:*** Decide on the role you currently do best and write it on the jigsaw piece |
| **c) How our experiences influence how we mentor and challenge our assumptions i.e. were we mentored and if so how** | 5. Exploring Problems | • ***Problem tree (cause and effect):*** Draw roots to represent how you were mentored and if positive draw a branch. From the nurtured branch, add leaves for every positive attitude or behavior it instilled in you. If it was a negative, draw a shorter branch and use words to express the negative attitudes or behaviours it left you with |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **and what affect this has had on us as mentoring COPETs.** | | |
| **d) Our pre-service teachers i.e. what experiences have they had and were they mentored before and how and thus, do we need to alter our approach to mentoring.** | 5. Exploring Problems | • ***Problem tree (cause and effect):*** As above but reverse the order i.e. negative attitudes and behaviours mentees have displayed about the mentoring process and draw roots to represent what the mentor might have said or done to cause this dominant response in the mentee. If it is a superficial thing, make the root short and narrow. If it is a significant thing, make the root longer and thicker.<br>• ***Sabotage:*** Resolve to overcome behaviours that are barriers to a successful mentoring relationship i.e. one way to counteract behaviours developed due to past mentors. |
| **e) What challenges or barriers prevent us from mentoring as we would wish to (to date). What can we do to overcome those within our control?** | 5. Exploring Problems<br>3. Developing a resources management proposal | • ***Free-Listing:*** In groups, write barriers to mentoring, as experienced to date.<br>• ***Gaps and conflicts***: To identify the issues underlying the core problem and find out if these issues are mostly about 1) gaps or 2) conflicts of power, 2a) interests (gains or losses), 2b) moral values, or 2c) information and communication. Using free listing, pile sorting or timelining, write a core problem and main cause on a card. For each cause, write down on the card if it is a matter of 1 or 2a/b/c. Then create a gaps and conflicts table placing cards in the appropriate column or in the middle if addresses both 1 and 2. Write each barrier on a lego brick building wall (aim to bring the wall down in the next year, as much as is possible)<br>• ***Resource Mapping:*** Identify the gaps of conflicts, which are in their control to some degree and identify what action is needed. |
| **f) How to differentiate between 'teaching oriented feedback' versus** | -Gaining Knowledge & Skills | • A feedback sheet is provided. Read the feedback sheet and place a 'T' if a piece of feedback is teaching oriented and a 'P' if it is planning oriented. Count how many 'T's and 'P's there are. Discuss. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **'planning oriented feedback' (Intro to be developed further in the next workshop).** | 4. Monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous) | • Extracts of feedback are provided on laminates. On a sheet of paper is a table with 2 columns. 1) 'Teaching Problems' and 2) 'Teaching Problems as a result of planning problems'. On the front of the laminate, problems are displayed in teaching. If it is deemed to be purely a teaching problem, place it in the teaching column. If it is deemed to be the outcome of a planning problem, it is placed in the planning column. If a planning problem, write possible problems on the back of the relevant card. Nominate one person to share. |
| **g) How to conduct effective learning conversations.** | -Gaining Knowledge & Skills<br>4. Monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous) | • **Think, Pair, Share:** Discuss in 3s why you selected this mentoring element. Nominate 1 person to share. Lead researcher writes each one down on board. For each time one reason is repeated, the lead researcher will tick them (to show strength of group agreement). Take Picture to reflect on at the next workshop.<br>• ***Observe Learning Conversation:*** Watch a video of a learning Conversation & evaluate against the criteria<br>• **'What if…" Role Play:** In 3s: one mentor, mentee, observer. Each given a different case study i.e. i.e. student who always goes to the negative, who always interrupts and so doesn't get it, thinks it was wonderful, is devastated, takes it personally, says they understand when they don't and it is hard to then make them accountable |
| **h) Identify a 'School Based Developmental Activity' to engage in and with between now and workshop 2** | 4. Monitoring and evaluating a project (continuous) | • ***Process Mapping:*** See reflective journal prompts and school based developmental activities associated with PALAR i) and k). Prompted to guidance re: completing reflective journals and co-researchers decide on what medium to use i.e. Dictaphone / written journal etc. |

## J. Inter-rater Coding



because you know it was the very first time he had ever met them. You know: "My name is Mister X" and "are you a student" and you know all the questions and there's the supervisor at the back and it put him under an awful lot of pressure and then similarly, his very last class that he ever taught was a supervision visit (AOIFE)

That's ridiculous! (NIAMH)

It was quite unfair on him and so the barrier then is, I don't know what you'd like to call that barrier? (AOIFE)

Well, how was it a barrier to you and your role? (EH)

You're also a collaborator with the supervisor, so you can't work with them if that's the way they are coming in (MOK)

You know the very first class you teach on your teaching practice is massively important. It's putting your toe in the water. It's your first time. I can remember my first time teaching at post-primary level in 4th year and having all these people watching you makes you double think everything, regardless because as far as, I don't give him a grade but the supervisor can and I felt I was pulled then as a COPET between helping my student and having a discussion with the supervisor about what we were doing and what we were about and that discussion was, it wasn't helpful enough for his first class. I think he should have. I think, your first class should be done in the privacy of the supervisor so you can actually give…(AOIFE)

EH….we're not actually supposed to go out in their first week of teaching…….

I'm not actually blaming the supervisor for one mili-second. It is just that that is what happened. If it wasn't his first class and had been his first lesson

## K. Mentoring Community of Practice Questionnaire

***Mentoring Community of Practice Questionnaire***

Dear Participant and Co-Researcher,

Please read the following information, as it is a brief guide to the questionnaire. There are several sections to this questionnaire but not all are completed as the same time and are spread across the study timeline! Please note that it is acknowledged that the title of your role is 'cooperating physical education teacher'. However, as a cooperating teacher you provide structured support, which includes "*mentoring, supervision and critical analysis of the experience as well as observation of, and conversations with, experienced teachers.*" ([1] Teaching Council, 2011: 13). For the purpose of this document, the term mentoring will be used to underpin those activities listed above.

1. **Background Information** (page 1): this will be completed once at the start of the study (Please ensure you assign your name. I hand out the questionnaire when we meet each time and this helps me to give it to you in a time economical and confidential fashion. It also allows me to reflect on your development throughout the study. Note: you will remain anonymous i.e. you will have a code number i.e. Q1 = (Questionnaire 1)

2. **Professional Development Perceptions** (page 2-3): this will be complete once at the start of the study

3. **Mentoring Perceptions** (page 4): this will be complete once at the start of the study

4. **Pre-group Questions** (pages 5, 7, 9): a question will be assigned in advance of when we meet. You'll be asked to reflect upon this and write your thoughts in the space provided which will allow you time and space to think about it before we come together. You will be provided with the question a week before we meet via email.

5. **Stimulated Recall** (pages 6,8,10): at the start of the 2nd and 3rd workshops etc, you will be asked to look over what you wrote in section 2 and 3 (and section 5 at workshop 3). You will be asked to reflect upon this and write your thoughts in the space provided.

Your views and experiences are valued and welcomed. Sharing your views will support me to make this as meaningful an experience as possible for you. Given the steps taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, I really hope that you will feel comfortable enough to openly express your thoughts. Thanks so much for taking the time to share.

Your colleague and co-researcher,

Eimear Holland

## *Mentoring Community of Practice Questionnaire*

Please complete all items / questions as honestly and accurately as you can.

**1. Background Information**

i. Name: _____ ii) Age: _____ iii. Gender (M/F): ___

iv. No of years teaching in current school: _____ v. Position in school: _____

vi. No of Colleagues in PE Department: ___ vii. Type of school (Gender, Approx. no of pupils, State, Religion etc) _____

viii. Approx. no of years mentoring: _____ ix. No of years mentoring within this partnership: _____

x. Were you mentored during your initial teacher education (Please tick): Yes ☐ No ☐

xi. If this affected your development, please explain how (if not, leave blank): _____

_____

_____

xi. If this affected how you mentor as a cooperating teacher, please explain how (if not, leave blank):

_____

_____

**2. Professional Development Perceptions**

a) Please tick the types of PE CPD you have engaged in in the last 12 months and if 'other' state the type:

| **Continuous Professional Development Activities (Please Tick)** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Informal dialogue to improve teaching | | Attendance at courses and workshops | |
| Reading professional literature | | Engaging with mentoring and peer observation | |
| Engaging with professional development networks | | Engaging with peer observation | |
| Completing qualification programmes | | Conducting individual and collaborative research | |
| Attendance at educational conferences and seminars | | Conducting observation visits to other schools | |

If there are other PE CPD activities, which do not fall under the above categories, then please state below:

_____

_____

b) During these activities, what was the main focus on (i.e. your needs, your pupils' needs, your schools' needs, implementing DES curricular changes)?: _____

_____

_____

c) How would you rate the quality of your CPD in the last 12 months? (Please circle and explain):

| Inadequate | Poor | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please explain: _____

_____

d) Did your CPD support you to be a reflective practitioner (Please circle)? Yes / No

Please explain: _____

e) Did your CPD support you to develop collaborative learning relationships (Please tick)? Yes / No

Please explain: _____

_____

_____

f) What is effective CPD?: _____

_____

g) What barriers have there been to your CPD in the last year?: _____

_____

_____

h) What benefits might there be to engaging in a mentoring CoP?: _____

_____

**3. Mentoring Perceptions**

a) What is effective mentoring?

_____

_____

b) How effective do you believe you are as a mentoring cooperating PE teacher?

| Inadequate | Poor | Good | Very Good | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please explain: _____

c) Benefits of engaging with a mentoring CoP?

i. For you: _____

_____

_____

ii. For your mentee:

_____

_____

iii. For your pupils: _____

_____

iv. For your school: _____

_____

_____

d) What barriers have there been to your role as a mentoring cooperating PE teachers in the last year?:

_____

_____

**Pre-group Questions (1)**

| **Pre-group Items** – The following question allows you to consider the specific focus of this workshop before we begin. It will help you to gather your thoughts. |
| --- |
| 1. Questions pending data analysis |

***Stimulated Recall (1)***

In section 2 and 3 of the questionnaire, you shared your CPD history prior to engaging in this study (including your experiences and your perceptions). You have since engaged in CPD as part of this study. Please read section 2 and 3 of the questionnaire again and reflect upon it in the space provided below i.e. has anything changed regarding your CPD experiences and perceptions. If yes or no, please explain why.

## L. Semi-structured Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Initial Focus Group / workshop observation questions:

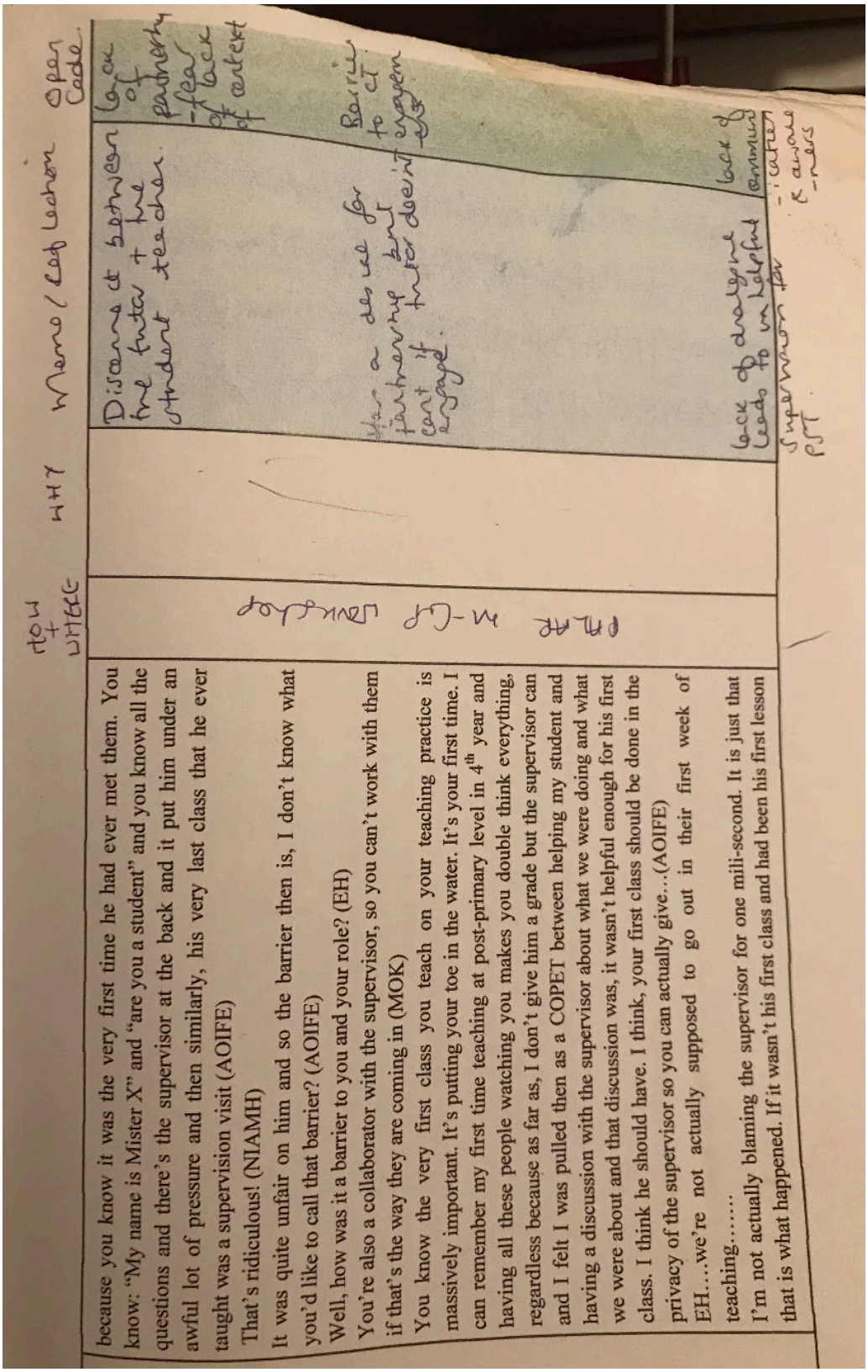
| ***Ontological Questions*** |
| --- |
| **1) What are our mentoring values?** i.e. *a) What do we feel is important?; b)What do we feel is unfair?; c) What do we feel should be invested in?; d) What do we feel should be challenged?*<br>**2) Can we accommodate different value perspectives?** i.e. *a) What do our values have in common?; What are the variations?; b) How can we see things from others' perspective i.e. what factors might cause them to be different i.e. own education as a pupil, teacher, mentor etc.?; c) What preconceptions have we taken for granted which we might need to reconsider?; d) How can we co-exist despite these differences i.e. respectful rules?*<br>**3) Are we ready to act on what doesn't match our values or will we just accept how things are, making no change (individually, socially or globally)?** i.e. *a) Are you willing to act on any one thing that you deemed important above in issue 1 i.e. important, unfair etc?; b) Could you pick one that you think you can act on, no matter how small it might seem?*<br>**4) Before we can make judgments about the practice of our pre-service teachers, can we consider that our own practice requires consideration? To what end?** i.e. *a) Can you think about: i) what is good in your practice and how you might now build that strength even further and ii) what needs attention and take action to work on it?; b) How will this benefit you? How will it benefit your pre-service teacher? How will it benefit others i.e. Community of Practice (CoP), school colleagues?*<br>**5) Who are the insider and who are the outsiders to this research?** i.e. *Am I, as a University tutor the outsider and the researcher or am I working inside within the community?* |

| |
|---|
| **6) Is what you know changing and / or evolving?** i.e. *a) Are there any changes to what you have felt previously throughout the course of this study or are your feelings unchanged?; b) If there are changes, what are they and why have these changes come about and if your feelings are unchanged, why do you think this is? i.e. what stable factors have led to you having such strong feelings prior to the study.* |
| ***Epistemological Questions*** |
| **1) What do we know to be true and important?** i.e. *a) What do you know to be true and important?*<br>**2) Where or from whom does your knowledge come?** i.e. *a) Where or from whom does your explicit knowledge come?; b) Is there any peripheral knowledge you gathered unconsciously but in time, realized you knew? How did you come to know?; c) Does your socio-political and historical context influence what you know and how so?; d) What "critical episodes" have taught you what you know?; e) Could "where" or "from whom" be incomplete, unreliable or too decontextualized?*<br>**3) Do you challenge your own knowledge and thinking?** i.e. *a) Is there anything which you have known which you now know to be inaccurate or incomplete?; b) Do you ask "I know this but what would happen if…?"; c) When you identify good elements of your practice, do you take this for granted or could you ask if what you know would change "If the future changed?"*<br>**4) Do you think you are aware of what you know and know how to use this knowledge for the better?** i.e. *a) Where are you on the tacit – explicit knowledge spectrum i.e. how aware do you feel you are of what you know?; b) Can you give yourself credit and articulate for others just how good you are?; c) How would this awareness skill help you in your career i.e. pointing out practical knowledge you have but now see for others who might not see it and / or don't understand why it is best practice; interviews, promotion etc?* |
| ***Mentor Specific Questions (Slight overlap with ontological-epistemological questions)*** |
| 1) What is an effective mentor?<br>2) What does an effective mentor look like and do? |

| |
|---|
| 3) Do you have some of these characteristics (more than before)?<br>4) Who / what has influenced the kind of mentor you currently are? i.e. your mentor, teacher, parent, coach etc?<br>5) Are you fulfilling your potential as a mentor or not? If yes, what has enabled this? If no, what barriers have prevented this? i.e. social, political, cultural, personal, school based, regionally based, nationally based?<br>6) What does a mentor have to contribute which a University tutor cannot? i.e. qualities, skills, experience etc<br>7) What is the difference between a supporting friendly mentor and a critical friend mentor?<br>8) What role should the mentor have, in feeding back to the University (tutor etc) (and should this be developed and how)?<br>9) Are there benefits to being a mentor and if so, what are they? Are there disadvantages and if so, what are they?<br>10) Have you learned anything about yourself (both personally and professionally [as a teacher, colleague, professional development leader etc] by developing as a mentor or not?<br>11) Has your development as a mentoring teacher spilled over to influence anyone else or has it lessened or stayed the same (pupils, colleagues within your department, colleagues, whole school colleagues, management colleagues, colleagues within the CoP, colleagues beyond the CoP)? |
| **Community of Practice Specific Questions *(Slight overlap with ontological-epistemological questions)*** |
| 1) Do you feel unsupported or supported in your role as a mentor?<br>2) Does engaging in and with a mentoring CoP make you feel less supported, more supported or no differently? Please explain?<br>3) Does engaging in and with a mentoring CoP have any impact on how effective you are as a mentor? Please explain?<br>4) Does engaging in and with a mentoring CoP make you feel less validated, more validated or feel no differently? Please explain?<br>5) Does engaging in and with a mentoring CoP make you feel more professionally isolated or professionally included or feel no differently? Please explain.<br>6) Does engaging in and with mentoring CoP have less or more to offer in comparison with other CPD activities? |

| |
|---|
| 7) Does engaging in and with a mentoring CoP help you to overcome issues within the social, political, cultural sphere or not? |
| 8) Does engaging in and with a mentoring CoP have any impact on how collaborative you wish to be? Please explain? |
| 9) Does engaging in and with a mentoring CoP have any impact on how you feel about being evaluated? Please explain? |
| 10) Are / were there any barriers or challenges to engaging in and with a CoP? If yes, explain what it/they are? |
| **Participatory Action Research Specific Questions** ***(Slight overlap with ontological-epistemological questions)*** |
| 1) Does engaging in and with PAR have any impact on how effective you are as a mentor? Please explain? |
| 2) Does engaging in and with PAR make you feel less validated, more validated or feel no differently? Please explain? |
| 3) Does engaging in and with PAR you feel more professionally isolated or professionally included or feel no differently? |
| 4) Does engaging in and with PAR have any impact on how collaborative you wish to be? Please explain? |
| 5) Does engaging in and with PAR make you feel more or less like you have something to contribute to others' professional development? (mentees, colleagues (in school and at the University)? |
| 6) Does engaging in and with participatory action research (PAR) make you feel more or less in control of your own professional development? |
| 7) Did you learn to consider enablers, barriers, challenges and opportunities as something to capitalise upon and work within or not? Please explain. |
| 8) Alternatively, did you accept that this is "just how things are"? |
| 9) Does engaging in and with PAR have less or more to offer in comparison with other CPD activities? |
| 10) Does engaging in and with PAR help you to overcome issues within the social, political, cultural sphere or not? |
| 11) Are / were there any barriers or challenges to engaging in and with a CoP? If yes, explain what it/they are? |

## M. Workshop Observation Logbook: Raw Data Sample



because you know it was the very first time he had ever met them. You know: "My name is Mister X" and "are you a student" and you know all the questions and there's the supervisor at the back and it put him under an awful lot of pressure and then similarly, his very last class that he ever taught was a supervision visit (AOIFE)
That's ridiculous! (NIAMH)
It was quite unfair on him and so the barrier then is, I don't know what you'd like to call that barrier? (AOIFE)
Well, how was it a barrier to you and your role? (EH)
You're also a collaborator with the supervisor, so you can't work with them if that's the way they are coming in (MOK)
You know the very first class you teach on your teaching practice is massively important. It's putting your toe in the water. It's your first time. I can remember my first time teaching at post-primary level in 4th year and having all these people watching you makes you double think everything, regardless because as far as, I don't give him a grade but the supervisor can and I felt I was pulled then as a COPET between helping my student and having a discussion with the supervisor about what we were doing and what we were about and that discussion was, it wasn't helpful enough for his first class. I think he should have. I think, your first class should be done in the privacy of the supervisor so you can actually give…(AOIFE)
EH….we're not actually supposed to go out in their first week of teaching…….
I'm not actually blaming the supervisor for one mili-second. It is just that that is what happened. If it wasn't his first class and had been his first lesson

**N. M-CoP PALAR Focus Group Intro Slide**

# Audit Trail (Rationale & Evolution)

02/03/2016 19:18

Title | Created

Introduction | Prior Learning | Note Taking Rationale & Evolution

## Introduction

I have spent quite a few years trying to figure out what I think; how I think and why I think what I think. I am by nature and have always been quite a reflective person. I have also always used writing to think through my thoughts personally, since I was a young girl and professionally, since I began learning to be a teacher. Figuring out what you think can lead to lots of dead trees and it doesn't take any shortcuts. I have also done this in many different ways through several different mediums. I have done this in ways that were very convenient for me. For example I have always carried a **little notepad and little pen**. Whilst having a laptop with me almost the entire duration of my doctorate (I have a Postman's shoulder and the deep tissue massage lady has my money), there were times when it was not appropriate: a music festival for example. However, the notepad was always able to fit in my small bag. When inspiration hits, it is important to 'screenshot' it, if only to return to it later. At times, when I just wanted to record a thought to be fleshed out at a later time, I would use my **iPhone to record a voice memo.** Both of these strategies prevented the loss of fleeting but potentially important thoughts. What might have been lost in the written word with only seconds to express it i.e. a "eureka moment" or an excited "I wonder" thought, a voice recording captured this well. So, I have used many tools for recording my thought-process. This doesn't make it easy to audit time-economically anyway. As with case study analysis, I aim to use this Audit Trail document like a case report. It is an amalgamated snap shot (or screen shot) of these decisions with examples provided to give a flavor. Original examples can be provided of course but for manageability purposes, I believe that this is the best medium. This Audit Trail wont be written over the 6 years but it will take screen shots of the moments where decisions were made and attempt to justify them through an explanation of the thinking at the time. It will also reflect on this decision showing a progression in thinking. It is one thing to judge the decision but another over the course of a doctorate to judge the progress in thinking. As a teacher, yes: performance is important and thinking should be informed but ipsative assessment of starting point to finishing point is also important. As is central to this study, self mastery of the process is very important.

## Workshop Semi-structured Observation Schedule and Field Log

Mentoring Workshops allow COPETs to learn together to target set and review their practice as individual mentoring cooperating teachers and as a mentoring CoP. Participatory Action Research (PAR) activities will be engaged in and with. These activities will be observed and the discussions will be observed (but also video-recorded). Because the direction is to be negotiated by the CoP, the exact schedule cannot be determined as yet. As the workshops progress this will be altered but the researcher will be observing for any changes. Questions outlined in the 'Semi-structured Focus Group Discussion' will be the focus of activities (i.e. what they perceive to be happening or changing). Also, the researcher will constantly ask the following questions: who?; what?: why?; where?; when?; how? (Goetz and LeComte, 1984 cited in Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003).

**Critical self-reflection:** For every event that is observed, the researcher will self-reflect asking questions such as: Is what I have observed influenced by my history and my perspectives? Without such a history would I have observed it somewhat differently? How might another person interpret what I observed? What objective evidence is there to support my claims about what I observed (as opposed to it being subjective and opinion oriented)? etc

### Semi-structured Schedule

**What to observe for (including but not limited to):**

- Who is passive?; Who is active?; Who is withdrawn?; Who is inclusive?; Who is exclusive?; Who is reinforcing?; Who is undermining?; Who is challenging? Who is engaging in active listening?; Who is resistant to group-work?; Who attempts to lead and who always allows others to lead?; Who is cooperative and who is uncooperative?; Who appears comfortable sharing and uncomfortable sharing?; Who is open to hearing others' views, examples, ideas, advice, questions and who is not; Who feels comfortable asking questions and seeking advice and who does not?; Are they engaging more in their own developmental targets or the CoP targets? Who appears more willing to appreciate that knowledge is wider than their context?; Who is willing to offer to read out an extract from their journal each week? Who appears more proactive? Do any smaller CoPs emerge i.e. COPETs within similar school types; those facing similar political issues; those with unresponsive pre-service teachers; those whose schools are close to one another etc? Who arrives early or stays behind to talk or ask questions? Do any COPETs plan to link together outside of the three workshops i.e. phone call, text, email, skype, meeting up (personally or professionally) etc?

- What body language is being displayed? What direction they are sitting in?; Open or closed posture?; Eye-contact?; Facial Expressions?; What language or terms are used? What participatory action research tasks and mentor education activities do they agree to engage in and with? Are they displaying mentoring characteristics and demonstrating mentoring skills more? What collaborative professional behaviours are COPETs demonstrating (as above)?

- Where do COPETs choose to sit (or with whom) and does this change? Where do COPETs propose to attend workshops (i.e. University, a school etc); Where do COPETs position themselves within activities where physical positioning is required etc

## Field Log

**Mentoring Workshop 1**

| Who / with whom (initials)? | When & how long? | What (behavior, dialogue etc?) | How and where? | Why? | Observer Memos / Comments (Reflections, Patterns) | **Open Coding** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aoife | Sharing hopes | "We learn something"; "That we can help our mentee". I follow up with the question: "I presume, at the moment, knowing you guys, that you are helping your mentee. So, what do you mean by that". Ans: "Helping to be engaged as professionals. You know, I don't know if Ria would say this but it's a bit like teaching in a school, where you want your children to become independent learners. That you are almost redundant. That they are able to develop the whole process of perfecting themselves but knowing what help is available and how to access it, knowing when to put up their hand. Knowing when to say. | | | Interesting that they are already referring to them as a mentee and not a student teacher or pre-service teacher or even student. It suggests that they are embracing their role as a cooperating teacher mentor. | **Benefits:**<br>**Learn**<br>**Help mentee**<br>**Helping mentee engage as professionals, become independent learners, you become redundant** |
| Padraig | Sharing hopes | "Be more effective in what we do. The 3 different ways of that we said: to create more of an ID for them rather than following exactly what we do. That only sparked in my head when you sent around the form looking at the different areas to look at…that they find it hard to create their own identity but I think that happens over the course of a few years anyways. | | Wanted to show that they were reflecting even before they arrived and that they were open to learning new practices and changing their horizons and parameters of thinking? | This is interesting. The very curriculum headings sparked reflection for them. Without even being given the info or the workshop activities having a menu to pick from made them think.<br>They had 3 and I didn't ask them for the other 2. I need to be strategic in assisting them in sharing what they discussed i.e. tell them they must only share the top 3 etc. makes it more obvious if they forget one. | **Benefits:**<br>**Be more effective as mentors**<br>**Help them develop a professional identity** |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Éamonn | Sharing hopes | "To give better feedback to improve their experience but more importantly, to improve our students experience. The better the student teachers practice, then the students benefit from that".<br>I validated their feeling of responsibility for their pupils | | | Éamonn is difficult to understand, as his accent is strong. I need to make sure that he isn't, as with the other groups, the only one feeding back and when he does, I need to repeat his point as a summery point or write it down.<br>-The responsibility they feel for their pupils is number one. Helping the student teacher is as much about making the provision adequate for their pupils. Need to pose to them though in the next workshop: "Other than feedback making pupils' experiences better, why else do you have a student teacher and why else do you give feedback"<br>I didn't challenge the balance of responsibility for the student v the pupil yet as their priority is certainly in camp pupil. I will challenge them in the future re: the conflict this holds. | **<u>Benefits:</u>**<br><br>**Give better feedback**<br>**Improve pupils experience**<br>**Make them feel more responsible for pupils** |
| Ria | Sharing fears with the group | "That it doesn't impact on the student"<br>"That we become frustrated that what we are learning here, stays in here and we don't get a chance to bring it outside, implement it or that this just becomes a 'talking shop"<br>I said: "We hope that wont happen. I'll put it in my egg as a hope" | | | Aoife's point is very interesting. As a CoP, one of the benefits is that it is a talking shop and without this CoP, professional dialogue surrounding mentoring is limited. However, they are clearly sick of CPD which isn't relevant or contextual enough with no follow up. They want to know that their time translates into change (which is an important pre-requisite for effective PAR | **<u>Fears:</u>**<br>**No impact on ST**<br>**Frustrated that don't get to use what we do here i.e. it being a 'talking shop'** |
| Aidan, Padraig and Niamh | Sharing fears with the group | Participants shrugged to indicate no fears. I said: "No fears! Wonderful. I'll write that one down".<br>"Actually, I have no fear but I didn't wanna write that down in case it sounded a bit too confident". I asked why. ANS: "We are gonna get something from this anyway" (Padraig) | | | Did everyone get at least one fear across and if not, were they put off by one person saying that they had no fears? There is a sample bias here that I need to be aware of i.e. they are here because they want to learn. How will we get teachers here who are less open to | **<u>Fears:</u>**<br>**No fear** |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | learning? These teachers are more important to engage but how??? | |
| Ellen, Oisín and Eamonn | | "As a person not living in greater Dublin, but being in X, if I don't get any more students, then this process becomes irrelevant for me and it's a wasted journey up and down the road"<br>"I have a concern about the science side…the shortfall from the science side…that they are getting so much from us on the PE side…that there's no interaction from the science side and we've had an awful lot of science students in over the last year. The science teachers are a bit sick of having science students in taking their classes all the time and that is an exam subject, so: similar to X…not being on the map. If the science teachers object to it and aren't happy with it then I'm not going to be able to have a student in next year. They have to be on board as well as us, like.<br><br>No fears shared by Oisín or Niamh | | Oisín has displayed signs of evaluation | Éamonn is such a valid concern. What if there aren't any students wishing to go home for placement near this school or during the 3 week placement etc. It is important that we help him to see none of it will be a waste of time if they can spill it into their teaching and become more aware of selling the managerial skills they gain etc i.e. even if he doesn't have a student, can he still provide CPD for teacher in his school (could be a stop gap exercise to keep them in the game).<br>Ellen's s concern is also a very real one. It is more difficult to develop a partnership when half of the teachers are not being invested in . Not only is the PE teacher having a student at the mercy of the Principal but also the science etc teacher. Will they feel threatened or jealous of what the PE teacher is doing? Will they want to taste a slice of it or will they feel negatively about what might be expected of them and as such, pull out. This process will only take us so far without the development of the other subjects. Oh to have only programmes preparing for one subject. This would be much easier and PEITTE would be much stronger ☹<br>Need to prompt Oisin to contribute. Try to refer to what he has said or done to build his confidence and ensure that he takes a turn at feeding back into discussions after think, pair, share etc. | **<u>Fears:</u>**<br>**Location might lead to no ST & this is a waste of time**<br>**Science not taking a student**<br>**No Fears**<br><br>**Contributing in small groups but less willing to** |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | apprehension when there was a Uni tutor change at school. | | **contribute to whole CoP** |

## Q. Developmental Activities List

*School Based Developmental Activities* - As stated above, during the mentoring CoP workshops, COPETs will identify an area for development i.e. indicative outcomes above. Based on the area for development identified, they will decide on a school based developmental activity to support them in making progress against their target. All participants will be asked to keep a reflective journal i.e. 1) below. Through engaging in journal writing they will be focusing on their experience, progress or lack thereof of any one or more of the activities listed below i.e. 2 a-p. They can opt to focus on one or a number of developmental activities, taking into account how busy they are in their professional and personal roles. The following mentor development activities will support them to meet their targets:

1) Keep a reflective journal in the light of targets you have set yourself. Regularly log successes, breakthroughs, breakdowns, challenges, barriers, concerns, fears etc. Comment on i) what happened; ii) what caused it to happen; iii) If you would change anything, what would it be and why; and iv) what will you do now and why.

2) All Other Activities:

   a) Practice conducting active observations.
   b) Video-recording a lesson you teach and conducting a freeze-frame active observation.
   c) Video-recording a pre-service teachers lesson and conducting a freeze frame active observation.
   d) Co-planning lessons with the pre-service teacher.
   e) Co-teaching lessons that you have co-planned and review it.
   f) Practice providing objective evidence based feedback.
   g) Practice balancing teaching versus learning oriented feedback.
   h) Pitching feedback to challenge pre-service teachers based on their stage of development.
   i) Develop a range of effective questioning techniques to support self-determination in the pre-service teacher.
   j) Developing from feedback sessions to conducting learning conversations.
   k) Developing language and body language.
   l) Audio-recording the learning conversation and evaluating language and dialogue.

m) Video-recording the learning conversation and evaluating body language and pre-service teachers reactions.

*n)* Developing pre-service teachers understanding of context i.e. "…but what would you do if you were in a different school where pupils were not well behaved?" etc.

*o)* Developing correspondence and communication with the University tutor.

p) Other

## R. Data pertaining to the Positive Impact of PALAR M-CoP Engagement upon CTs' Teaching and Learning Practice

Ellen believed that engaging in and with "the community of practice…led to [her] taking more notice of the students and then that has had a knock on effect to [her] own teaching" (FG1). As indicated by Sean, CTs reported that engaging in and with mentoring motivated them develop their practice: "I feel I want to up my game, to show that I am open to development" (PGQ). CTs felt that they "learned a lot from [the PST]" (Aoife, RJ). Ellen agreed that with respect to benefits, that this was "one of the biggest things from" engaging in and with the PALAR M-CoP (FG1). Oisín expressed this: "it has helped with my practice. It has helped how I look at how I practice….so it has helped me personally become better at what I do" (FG2).

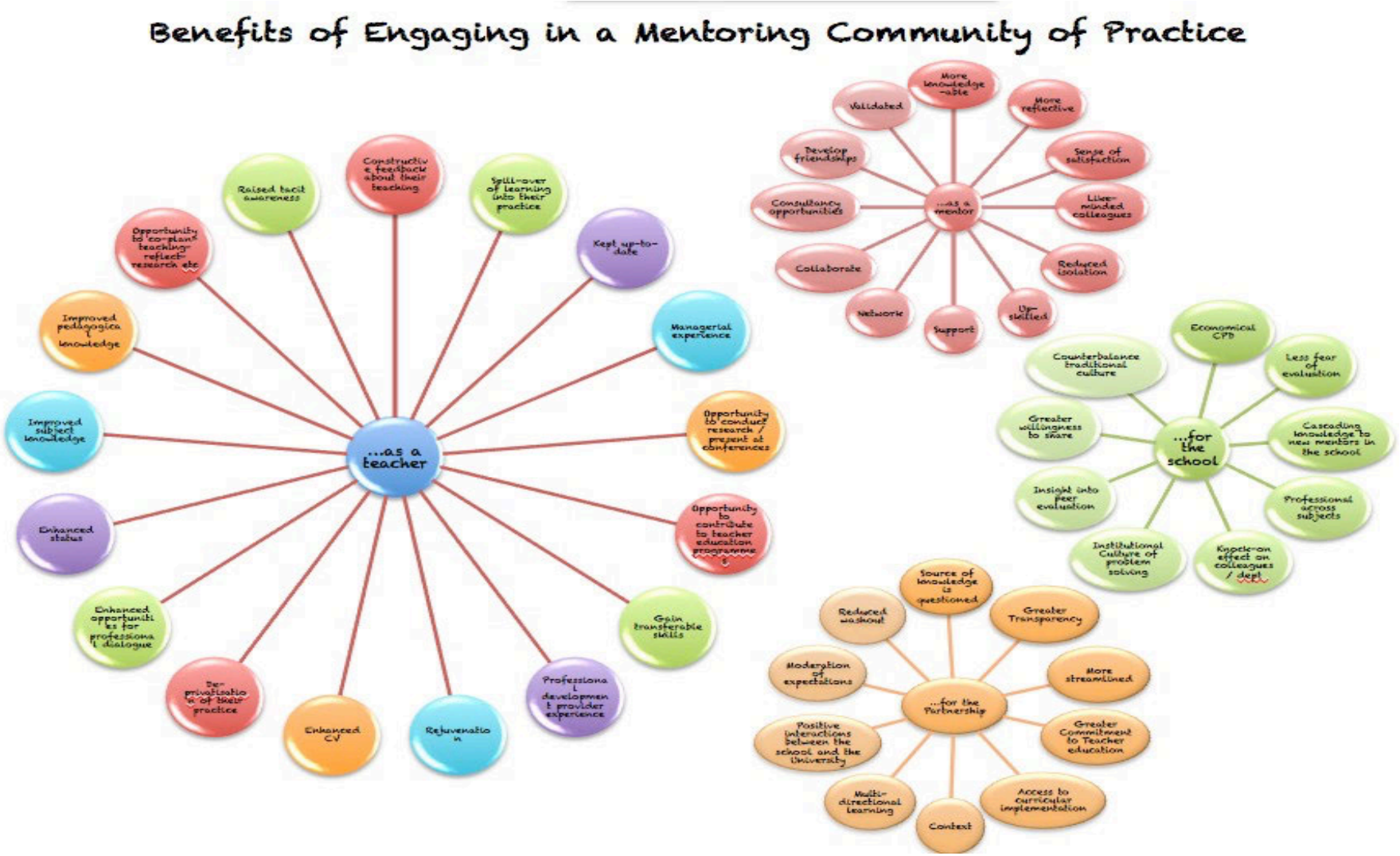
Ria explained how this happened: "by stopping and observing or questioning what a student teacher is doing actually leads you to doing the same thing with your teaching" (RJ). Ellen also indicated that through deeper pedagogical dialogue, "shortfalls in [her assessment] system" were identified, which then led to discussions about the "possibilities for an extension of the assessment to include 'improvement' marks" for pupils (RJ). Through learning conversations, Abigail felt that she was focusing more on "the planning, differentiation [and] assessment / review" of lessons than previously (LJP). In an attempt to be a good role model, Aoife set a target to "look at discipline issues more carefully in [her] own practice…[to]…'clean' that up" (Stimulated Recall [SR])**.** She asserted a belief that this would "be more helpful to my student (and myself!)" (SR). Sean expressed how mentoring a PST encouraged him and his colleague to experiment with their practice a little more: "If the teaching practice student does the session and then we look at it and go: 'okay, I've not seen that done before'. So, we'd try it out ourselves in the next class" (FG2). Others

identified that engaging with their PST raised their own sense of tacit awareness of their pedagogical strengths:

"It makes you sit down and think: 'Right this student might be struggling with x' and it makes you think: 'oh God, what do I do in my practice that makes me not struggle with x? So, it makes you see the positives in your practice which makes you then try and improve your practice" (Aoife, FG2).

It also assisted CTs to "'see' new problems through the eyes of the student", which they perceived to have expanded their knowledge (Aoife, PGQ). Aoife made a causal link between her engagement with the CPDL and positive outcomes for her pupils. She stated: it "does improve your practice…it improves pupil learning"

**S. FEILTE Conference Poster - Benefits**



## T. FEILTE PALAR Posters

### Evaluate the Assessment for 'your' Learning

**"Do as I say, not as I do!"**: Do you experience AfL in your learning (i.e. Croke Park Hours), as your pupils do? Spot the difference...

| Assessment for Learning Strategies | For Pupils | For You |
|---|---|---|
| ✓ Learning Outcomes Shared? | | |
| ✓ Learning outcomes based on knowledge of prior learning? | | |
| ✓ Prior learning or experiences diagnosed and catered for? | | |
| ✓ Learning is Personalised? | | |
| ✓ Self determination theory is considered (Competence, Autonomy, Relatedness [C.A.R])? | | |
| ✓ Criteria / steps are provided to allow you to pace your progression | | |
| ✓ Discussion is allowed to contextualise potential for your school | | |
| ✓ Questions are posed and requested? | | |
| ✓ Thinking time is afforded? | | |
| ✓ It is not a one off but an ongoing learning opportunity? | | |
| ✓ Progress is observed? | | |
| ✓ Progress is measured in a meaningful way? | | |
| ✓ Progress is recorded? | | |
| ✓ Achievement is focused on personal progress/self mastery? | | |
| ✓ Set targets (which are short and long term)? | | |
| ✓ Action set for targets to be met? | | |
| ✓ A timeframe is provided for said target ito be met? | | |
| ✓ Follow up on progress of implemented action? | | |
| ✓ Feedback is provided (both process & outcome)? | | |

Would you give a 'high five' to your 'assessment for learning'?


"Teachers can enhance or destroy students' desires to learn more quickly and more permanently through their use of assessment than through any other tools at their disposal" (Stiggins, 2001).


**"Do as I say, not as I do!"**: After a lesson inspection, does the inspector / your peer support you to learn from your practice, as you are encouraged to support pupils?

| Post-Lesson | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Adequate time was spent discussing my lesson | | |
| Was a two-way conversation | | |
| Practice was evaluated in light of my professional development plan | | |
| Practice was evaluated in light of the lesson plan | | |
| Planning was evaluated (as opposed to just teaching) | | |
| Context was taken into consideration | | |
| Opportunity was given to show how well I reflected on practice | | |
| Questions were asked to help me reflect | | |
| Attempts were made to understand why I did what I did | | |
| Prompted & supported to identify areas for development (and targets) by myself | | |
| I learned from the conversation | | |
| The evaluator appeared to learn from the conversation | | |
| Felt Motivated | | |
| Felt validated | | |
| Felt empowered | | |

# 'Participatory Action Research' (PAR) in Action

**COPET+ Community of Practice Workshop 1 Outline**

**Resources:** Gifted Boxed DCU USB sticks, DCU Conference packs (DCU Folder, pens, pencils), COPET + Programme Folder, COPET+ Clipboard, Questionnaire, Group Agreement Forms, Movie Clapperboard, Leaf post-its, Wishing eggs, Jumbo cards and Smaller cards, (laminated), Roles & Responsibilities cards, Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces (white), Whiteboard, Stand and Paper, Markers, Diamond 9 sheets, Lego bricks, Regular Post-its, dvd clips, video recorder, cameras (for capture PAR artifacts).

| Indicative Content | PAR Process | PAR Activity Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| a) What is your dream for your engagement in COPET+ | 1. Defining project goals and mission<br>2. Setting Priorities | • ***Ideal scenario, Pile Sorting and Ranking:*** Based on CoP dreams, each COPET+ must write what they feel were the main 3 dreams on a post-it. Move post-its around into common piles and identify which ones are most common, placing those most common on top and those least common on the bottom<br>• ***Time Capsule:*** each pace their dream (as above) and fears or concerns (on the back of the post-it) inside their time capsule. Can share if they wish. Will review at the next workshop and perhaps share next time. |
| b) What the role of a mentoring COPET is i.e. roles, responsibilities | 1. Defining project goals and mission<br>2. Setting Priorities | • ***Semi-free listing:*** Look at cards with roles on them.<br>• ***Ranking:*** In 3's order them top (most important) to bottom (least important)<br>• Each group are then allocated one role from the top 3s.<br>• ***Tree Mapping & Free Listing:*** On the back of the role, write down responsibilities associated with that role.<br>• 1 person is nominated to share with the CoP<br>• Any thoughts?<br>• Would you add any roles, which were not there? (Share other roles from literature on prezi)<br>• ***Identity Web:*** Decide on the role you currently do best and write it on the jigsaw piece |
| c) How our experiences influence how we mentor and challenge our assumptions i.e. were we mentored and if so how and what affect this has had on us as mentoring COPETs. | 5. Exploring Problems | • ***Problem tree (cause and effect):*** Draw roots to represent how you were mentored and if positive draw a branch. From the nurtured branch, add leaves for every positive attitude or behavior it instilled in you. If it was a negative, draw a shorter branch and use words to express the negative attitudes or behaviours it left you with |
| d) Our pre-service teachers i.e. what | 5. Exploring Problems | • ***Problem tree (cause and effect):*** As above but reverse the order i.e. negative attitudes and behaviours mentees |


## U. Summary of reflection ‘in’, ‘on’ and ‘for’ CPDL implementation goal critical actions

| CTs were found to: |
| --- |
| i) reflect ‘in’ and ‘on’ critical actions for complex change due to “suitable prompts for reflection” e.g. PALAR M-CoP reflective tools;<br>ii) share their reflections on critical actions for complex change with community members (Girvan *et al.,* 2016);<br>iii) update one another about progress against their critical actions for complex change, through the use of artefacts e.g. ‘marbles of success’ (Wesely, 2013);<br>iv) explicate how critical actions for complex change were applied and provide a contextual rationale for why they felt they were effective, through the use of artefacts e.g. ‘pearls of wisdom’ (Timperley, 2010);<br>v) update one another about complex barriers to their practice, through the use of artefacts e.g. ‘barrier wall’ (Wesely, 2013);<br>vi) judge if shared critical actions for complex change could be a good fit for their own contexts, at some point in time (Wenger, 2009);<br>vii) validate or query community members’ critical action for complex change attempts (Wenger *et al.,* 2002);<br>viii) use feedback from SP partners to reflect ‘for’ the creative adaptation and refinement of their evolving critical actions for complex change, and co-produce new approaches to implementation (Saldana, 2014), through social constructivist processes. |

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